

Green Angel's Light

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Green Angel's Light

by [phoenixreal](#)

Summary

Tony keeps getting repeat visits from a god of mischief, but he has no idea why. Eventually, he begins to think of him as some kind of guardian angel because he seems to show up at the times he need someone the most. His world is quickly unraveling around him and Loki, never patient, ends up snatching up Tony and whisking him away. Loki's enemies, though, take it as an opportunity, and Tony finds out just exactly how mortal he is without his suit to protect him.

Notes

This fic is being translated into Chinese! Please visit:
<http://www.mtslash.net/thread-275696-1-1.html>
<https://archiveofourown.org/works/17090357>

First Story Arc complete. Will be continued up to 20 chapters later on.

Please note: This is an angst fic. It isn't pretty, and it isn't romantic or sweet. I plan a redemption arc for Loki next, but he's pretty arrogant, entitled, and in general a dick. Tony is closer to the Tony Stark in the comics that lost everything to alcoholism, so he's pretty emotionally messed up before the start. I use tags for a reason, please mind them.

Viridian Shadows

Chapter Notes

Edited 10-3-14

Angels are often depicted as vengeful servants of God. Angel in this story doesn't refer to the idea of a conventionally angelic person. Think Old Testament scare the crap out of the person seeing them angel. This refers to arrogance and entitlement as well. Loki may be the Green Angel in the title, but he is not "angelic".

Green Angel's Light

A Canon Divergent MCU

Slash Fanfiction Novel

Frostiron

Loki X Tony Stark

Beverly L. Anderson



The first time it happened, Tony was more than a little surprised.

He was in his shop welding the chassis of the Mark 20, his new Python, as he called it, when he felt the strange sensation of someone watching him. It was almost like he could sense someone in the very room, and not in the way he normally did. It was a completely different thing. He shook his head, looking up with the welding goggles still on and pausing. It was odd because no one came down to his lab unless they wanted something, and then they certainly didn't watch him

without saying something. He waited a moment to see if the sensation passed.

The infamous “invasion” had occurred over three months ago, and since then, they hadn’t seen Thor, but he’d invited the other Avengers to use Stark Tower as a home base, unofficially naming it Avengers Tower. They all been very quick to take Tony up on his offer, and he often wondered if his money and gadgets were the only reason they wanted to be here. Fury had wanted to base everyone on the helicarrier, and to be honest, one of the reasons he offered Stark tower was to annoy SHIELD’s director. He also wanted to have Bruce around, and he knew that he’d be off and gone if he had to stay that close to SHIELD. Offering him a somewhat neutral area to work from, gave him the chance to stick around. To be honest, though Tony would never voice it aloud, he wanted Bruce’s friendship more than anything. Sometimes he was lonely, and he couldn’t tell anyone that because of who he was. He also wanted to see if he couldn’t have a better relationship with Steve since they’d gotten severely off on the wrong foot. Natasha he was still wary of and Clint seemed like he could be fun.

The sensation of being watched did not go away. He wondered if Steve had come down and was hem hawing around waiting for him to acknowledge him. He felt like Steve expected him to turn and salute him when he walked into a room. Tony did, sometimes, however it was because he was being facetious. It never failed to get an annoyed look out of the military man. At least he stopped with the “salutes are a privilege” crap. Like Tony cared. He turned off the torch and stood up straight slowly. He was curious but at the same time, felt the strangest sensation crawling up his spine. He turned around, pulling the welding goggles down to see someone he didn’t expect.

Loki was standing in the middle of his shop in a set of green and gold robes and looking around as though it were perfectly normal for him to be there. Tony saw no weapons or armor, and he didn’t have the crazy helmet that he liked to wear when he was trying to conquer Earth with an alien army. He looked positively placid and unhurried. It was if he hadn’t just somehow appeared in the middle of Tony Stark’s lab that quite possibly had more security on it than Fort Knox and the Pentagon combined. Tony watched for a long moment to make sure he wasn’t hallucinating. It wouldn’t have been the first time he’d imagined seeing the figure that often appeared in his night terrors of flying through the glass of his tower window and spiraling toward the ground. He swallowed a thick rising of spit and bile in the back of his throat and wondered if perhaps he had actually lost his mind this time. He’d been several days without sleep...

“Sir, there is an intruder...” JARVIS began. Okay, well, if JARVIS said there was an intruder, that meant that he was actually standing in the shop and this wasn’t just some strange nightmare made in the daylight hours indicating a possible psychological break.

“Really, JARVIS?” Tony cut him off before he could give him further details. It was quite obvious that he didn’t need them. What else was JARVIS going to tell him? There’s an alien that’s worshipped like a god standing in the lab. “I think I can see that.”

“My apologies, Sir, I’m afraid I am not designed to pick up magical teleportation signatures,” JARVIS said.

“We’ll have to fix that,” he muttered pulling off the welding gloves and approaching Loki carefully.

When JARVIS spoke, he hadn’t seemed surprised, simply continued what he was doing, which seemed to be looking around the shop. Tony wasn’t sure what was going on, but he wasn’t walking right into some sort of trap. Tony was more than aware of what Loki could do. Thor had been quite willing to let them know his brother’s capabilities.

Loki smiled at him, turning with an even stare. “Hello there, Anthony Stark.”

"You know, we still have a hulk upstairs that is more than willing to leave another Loki-print in the floor," he said, moving closer and putting his equipment down on the table with more than a small amount of trepidation. Why, though, was his heart beating so much faster? It wasn't the first time he'd faced the god, and this time Loki was weaponless, of course it didn't mean he was powerless. Tony wasn't an idiot.

Loki sighed, turning away from him with his wrists crossed at the base of his spine. "I'm not here to fight, I just came to visit," he said, shrugging and looking about the place.

Tony snapped the bracelets to the suit on without looking. Last time Loki was around he wasn't too kind, tossing him from the tower and trying to take over the world and all. Loki's image often appeared in those frequent nightmares, along with the portal that led to him dying for a short time. Actually, he had nightmares about a lot of things lately that he didn't want to talk about. "Um, yeah, not buying it. Why here, Bambi?"

Loki shook his head, turning back to him with a deceptive smile. "To be honest, I'm not sure. When I thought of where I'd like to go, I appeared here."

"And why are you here? Still haven't got a good answer, Rudolph," Tony said. He really should call the other Avengers, but for some reason he was curious and wanted to know what exactly had brought the god of mischief to his door. The strange sensation was stronger now, and he had no idea what it was. He was sure it had something to do with magic. Fucking magic, he hated magic so much.

Loki shook his head. "Not certain, to be honest, Son of Stark," he said, looking around the shop again. "You spend more time with machines than other humans, this is unusual from what I understand studying Midgard," he said thoughtfully, hands still tucked neatly behind his back. "Why is that?"

Without thinking, Tony snorted and said, "They're easier, don't have to worry about betrayal with something I programmed myself."

He blinked rapidly for a moment, a scowl creasing his dark brows. What the hell did he say that for? That was the truth, of course, but he'd never told anyone that. He looked up at Loki again and wondered what the hell he was here for again. He shook away thoughts that were trying to force themselves to the surface about the reasons he loved his bots more than any human that lived. He frowned deeply and glared at the god. Was he using some sort of truth magic on him? He really fucking hated magic. Stupid magic gods and their stupid magic teleportation and magic truth spells and magic. Fucking magic.

Loki arched a brow and looked at the shorter man with an cool glance. "Indeed," he said thoughtfully. That answer had been wholly unexpected, mostly because he knew it was true, and of course, the god of lies could detect one when it was spoken. He'd expected some smart answer out of him, but instead he got pure truth. More than that, though, Loki noticed. It was such a pure truth that even Loki's own magic could not corrupt it. Was there such purity in the words of a human? He had thought it impossible.

"How have you been?" he said, picking up an unfinished circuit and examining it thoughtfully.

Unlike Thor, Loki had absorbed much information on Midgard and that included technology. He knew things that others would never realize. He knew how Midgard worked and he understood technology in a way his brother never could. To Loki, technology was simply another sort of magic to be understood. He didn't command the power over this particular magic that Tony did, but not all magicians could handle all types of magic. It confounded him how the Midgardians

dismissed magic of other types in favor of this technology. Were not all things magical that were not understood to these silly apes?

Tony looked at him. "Gods making small talk in my shop, what will happen next? Won't the great thunder-head sense you're here on Midgard and smash through the window?" he asked. "I mean, I've had enough of replacing windows in this place. They aren't exactly cheap."

"Ah, but I'm in my cell, nice and cozy where he left me," Loki said turning to walk away and simply disappearing into green shadows and mist.

Tony looked at where he had been for a long time then shook his head. Stupid gods and their stupid magic, he thought and went back to work, thinking no more on it. Tony's dexterous hands moved with speed and agility that few had. It was admirable to any that watched him work, though rarely did any watch Tony work. Despite Loki's distraction, Tony fell into what he was doing. Of course, his mind dwelled. Loki was messing with him that had to be it. There wasn't anything else to it. Loki was tricking him; that was what he did best. He was the god of mischief and trickery, and he wasn't even a really an Asgardian, he was from an entirely different place than Thor. Thor hadn't been too forthcoming with information about his brother's true origins, just that they were another species of the nine realms.

Tony's world went on as it normally did. Three months after the invasion, he was spending most his time on clean up duty and helping rebuild the city. Stark Tower was finished, of course, complete with floors dedicated for the various Avengers. He was proud of what he'd built.

However, there was a lot more left to do. At first, it seemed that everyone was very happy to have the chance to have such a good place to live, and Tony really wanted to make them happy. During the rebuild, he'd built areas for each member of the team, and several other guest areas just in case the team's numbers were to increase in the future. He gave everyone a phone and a tablet that had a link to JARVIS, and he agreed to work with Fury and SHIELD on some projects, as long as they did not include weapons. He wouldn't walk that road again. There wasn't a lot that he was worried about, except of course, the constant nightmares he was plagued with. He would deal with it, alone, like he always did, though.

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The second time it happened, Tony walked out of his shower and almost ran right into Loki.

It was a couple months later, and he found himself sulking in his shower. He stepped out of the shower and looked up and stared for a minute to find Loki staring intently at the arc reactor embedded in his chest. Tony blinked, grabbing a towel with one hand and wrapping it around his waist, suddenly bothered by his nudity. To be honest, it had been a crappy week already, so Loki showing up as a voyeur in his bathroom didn't surprise him all that much. He'd been indulging in a session of self-pity in the shower, contemplating if it was possible to fuck anything up more thoroughly, and had decided a resounding yes, because Tony Stark could always fuck up more than he already had before. He glanced at the shaving kit on the counter for a second. Strange because it had been on his mind while he showered, in particular the straight razor in it that he kept incredibly sharp.

"Um, okay, so you showing up in my bathroom is a little creepy, Twinkletoes," he said finally after a few moments of the intense staring by the god. "I mean, here it's called stalking and you can get arrested for it...I know I'm simply the most amazing human on earth but this is a little odd."

"This," he said, touching the arc reactor finally. "I couldn't control you because I couldn't reach your heart," he said with a frown, gliding his fingers over the glowing object and the flesh around it. Tony shivered as his fingers brushed the over-sensitive skin on the outside of the reactor

housing. Despite the steam and heat from the hot shower, he was suddenly chilled to the bone.

“Yeah...” Tony said almost gasping at the cold touch. “A miniaturized arc reactor, keeps me from dying.”

“Why do you need it? Does it replace your heart?” he asked. Loki’s eyes flickered between a strange glowing green to light blue as he stared at the blue of the arc reactor. His eyes never strayed from the object.

Tony shook his head. “No, but I have chunks of shrapnel in my heart and this thing keeps them from going through it and killing me.” Again, he frowned. What the hell? Why was he being so honest with Loki? He had a smart aleck remark ready about how he had no heart, and that was proof, and it didn’t happen. He swallowed thickly and looked up at him suddenly feeling his pulse escalate.

Loki nodded, a green energy emerging from his finger where it rested on the glowing blue arc and surprising Tony. “Interesting, it would seem that humans have some sort of connection between their physical heart and their soul after all,” he said and simply disappeared in a puff of green mist that mixed with the steam from the shower, leaving Tony staring at nothing.

“Sir...there is an...” JARVIS began.

“Shut up, JARVIS,” Tony sighed, shaking his head and walking out of the bathroom shakily.

He sat down on the bed and rubbed his temples. Stranger and stranger. First Loki showed up randomly then today he shows up after he had spent half an hour in the shower contemplating if life was worth leading anymore. The panic attacks had become more frequent, and the dreams of both that blasted portal to space and the cave were more bright and vivid than ever before. Strangely enough, Loki’s face no longer visited his terrors. He had enough without Loki’s presence, though. He hid them well, and the team saw him as his usual snarky, asshole self. He swallowed, squeezing his eyes shut for a long moment. They had to see him that way. He couldn’t let them see this part of him. Never. He wasn’t going to be worthless and weak in front of them. Despite everything he felt this desperate need to make certain they never saw the reality of who he was underneath the surface.

The easiest way to prevent unauthorized access was to put up a firewall. Tony Stark had done so in spades. No one could get past the cocky, self-assured attitude, always ready with a quip or a smart ass remark on the issue. He deflected every hurtful thing with something annoying or outright rude. It was the best way, after all, to make sure he didn’t have to think any more about what they’d said. If he looked hurt, they’d know, they’d know that he had a heart and that every time, it hurt.

It hurt when Steve told scolded him like five years ago because old he felt like one all over again. He didn’t see the childhood hero that had decorated his walls now. He saw someone that had taken the place of his father in all his dismissive nature and Tony accepted it, craved it even. Steve knew what a great man Howard Stark was, so of course, he knew what a great man Anthony Stark was not.

He would know better than anyone, of course, except perhaps Obie. And sometimes he saw Obie in Steve and he wanted to run and hide like scared kid because he couldn’t take that again, he couldn’t take that hurt and pain. In the end, perhaps it was Steve out of all the team that hurt him the most. He would berate him for not being a team player and refusing to follow orders. He didn’t understand Tony, and it hurt the most that Steve had his opinions and refused to try and change them, and he refused to try and understand Tony. Tony was so often that little kid, sitting on his

bed staring up at the poster of Captain America with a look of bliss and swearing that one day he'd be a hero just like him. He couldn't have failed more miserably, he thought.

It hurt when Bruce would go on one of his anti-technology tirades, and then have no problems using the technology that Tony provided him with to further his research. He loved Bruce, but he felt so small when he went on about Tony's reliance on technology. His hand invariably went to his chest at those times to the technology that was keeping him alive. He wanted to tell Bruce that he'd done so much, invented dozens of life saving devices and implants, and research things just specifically for him. Yet still, Bruce didn't see the hurt when Tony deflected it with a usual smirk and eye roll. He did the same when Bruce would chide him for his abuse of his own body through drink or lack of sleep. Bruce didn't understand, he couldn't understand.

It hurt when Natasha thought she knew everything about him when she really knew nothing. She believed that she was the super spy, and she knew all the gory details, and would hold Tony to a standard he just couldn't meet. She'd tell him that he was better than his mistakes, so he should just stop making them. She'd tell him that an absentee father was no excuse for his hatred of authority. She'd tell him that Obie trying to kill him was in the past and he should move on. She'd tell him that the torture he endured was nothing compared to what others had been through. In short, she'd invalidate everything about him in her own effort to help him. He'd smile and drop a joke and walk away hiding his shaking hands. There must be something wrong if he couldn't deal with these things, some flaw inside him, since others had gone through worse. Was he so flawed and messed up that he couldn't move past something so simple?

It hurt when Clint would crack jokes about his alcoholism or his womanizing. Clint didn't understand that the alcohol was his protection and the women were the only way he could attempt to feel anything but numb anymore, but even they weren't enough. Clint would come across articles of Tony's wilder escapades and ask him about them, wanting to get details on the high profile women he'd slept with and what happened. Tony would joke and act like it wasn't a big deal, but inside he was reliving the fact that every time he crawled out of his bed away from a sleeping woman, feeling used, lost, alone, and then he would shower to hide the tears that invariably fell. Then he would grab a bottle of something alcoholic and drown the thoughts before he hid himself away in the shop so Pepper could take them away.

Of them all, it was Pepper and Rhodey that could hurt him the most. He loved them beyond all else, and he would do anything in the world for them. In fact, he had in some ways done just that. They had been with him at some of his lowest points, but even they didn't know everything, though they thought they were experts in Tony Stark. They didn't know about some of the things that happened to him, the things that only he knew about because the other people had taken the knowledge to the grave. They couldn't understand his continued battle with alcohol, and he tried so very hard, for them, to be better. He did so try for Pepper, he tried to be perfect and be her man, but she drifted away from him even so. Back and forth they went, but it didn't stifle his love for her. And Rhodey, though he would finally tire of Tony's actions, he loved his friend more than words could express.

So this week had been one of those kind of weeks where everyone seemed to have a problem with Tony. Tony had nearly hit the breaking point, but instead he dressed and went to the shop to work with some of his bots to keep his mind off of what the others were thinking and doing. It didn't matter to him, really, it didn't.

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The third time he was having a nightmarish flashback.

He was in the cave again, and screaming as they cut into his chest without anesthesia, seeing the faces spinning and laughing at him in the darkness. He was fighting unseen assailants and screaming for them to stop, to just stop, hearing his own bones crack, and even the ether wasn't working enough to put him completely out. The smell stuck in his memories, though and sickened him to this day.

He sat up with a shout, grasping for unseen hands and panted for a moment, sweat dripping off his face and down his back. "JARVIS, low lights," he said in a raspy voice, obviously he'd been yelling in his sleep again. "Won't be going back to sleep again after that," he muttered, a glorious headache beginning behind his eyes. He groaned and rubbed his eyes until he saw sparks and stood up, stopping to see that Loki was sitting in the chair that sat in the corner of the room.

"Does your past come to often like that?" Loki asked, thoughtfully.

Tony sighed. "Are you going to keep doing this?" he asked. He didn't even flinch anymore when he saw him, and perhaps if he had stopped to think about it, he would have found it strange. Three visits from the man, god, whatever, that had tossed him out his window, tried to and almost succeeded in taking over the world, and pretty much put everyone's world in sideways mode, and he wasn't bothered. Wasn't that a strange thing indeed?

"I'm not sure. You interest me, I decided to study you," Loki said, not moving. He sat comfortably in the large chair, legs spread and arms draped over the arms of the plush red fabric. He was dressed differently, though, this time instead of the green and gold robes, he wore a pair of loose trousers and a blousy green shirt. His hair was pulled back to the nape of his neck, which was another difference tonight.

Tony rolled his eyes, still standing still and not moving. "I'm not some animal in a cage for you to watch and study."

"But you are, Tony, only your cage is this Tower and your own mind," he said as Tony mopped his face with a towel from beside the bed. Long ago, he'd learned to keep three things beside his bed. A glass of water, a bottle of scotch, and a towel were ever present. Tonight, he thought he might use all three.

He looked at the green clad god and frowned. "What does that even mean?"

"A gilded cage is still a cage," he said and was gone again in a smoky mist of black and green.

"Sir," JARVIS inquired.

"I swear to all those idiots in Asgard that call themselves gods, if you are trying to warn me about an intruder again, I'm going to deactivate your speech program for a week," he said, dropping the towel and exasperated at the fact JARVIS seemed to be unable to pinpoint Loki until he was gone. He wondered if the god himself were doing something to interfere with him after the first time when JARVIS recognized his presence almost as soon as Tony did. Fucking magic.

"Ah, yes sir," JARVIS answered and said nothing else as Tony flopped back into the bed.

He spent the rest of the night contemplating what exactly Loki kept showing up for. There wasn't a good pattern, and Tony knew patterns. The first time he'd been in the shop, granted he had been in an anger induced work frenzy at the time, but other than that, there was nothing special. The second time had been after a rough week with the team and he'd felt particularly low, he remembered. That time his thoughts had drifted dangerously close to places that he didn't want to go most of the time. There were some very dark places in Tony's mind. And this time, he'd been in

a flashback. He'd had other flashbacks since Loki's first arrival, but none quite as severe as this one, he supposed. Was he showing up when he needed someone? He snorted. Yeah, right, like Loki of all people was some sort of guardian angel or something. That was wishful thinking on the part of deluded mind. He sighed, covering his eyes with his arm and waited for the sleep he knew would refuse to come.

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Almost two months passed before the next occurrence, at least the next occurrence that Tony would know about. This time, Tony was in the middle of cleaning out the arc housing when he felt the sensation that he was being watched again. He ignored it until Loki came walking around, in his usual green robes once more. He looked fascinated by what Tony was doing.

"Before you ask, this is just regular maintenance, if I don't clean the housing, an infection sets in that could spread to my heart and kill me within a week," he said without looking up.

Loki watched for a while. "Would you rather have the thing removed?"

Tony paused, looking up. "Well, yeah, but right now the surgery would kill me. Working on figuring out how to do it in my R&D upstairs, but you know, takes time," he said, again, telling the truth and not knowing why. He stopped questioning it. Apparently, he was incapable of lying to the god of lies.

For some reason he didn't feel the inclination to push Loki away like the others. It wasn't like Loki actually showed up because he liked him, either. He felt like maybe he was a passing fancy for a bored god. It still didn't explain how he could show up and Thor seemed to know nothing of his visits. Tony had been being onerous and teased Thor about Loki's room and board a few days before when Thor came down to tell them the Bifrost had been repaired at last. Thor had told him that Loki spent much of his time reading and in study.

"It is your weakness," Loki said, watching as Tony carefully ran the swabs into the housing.

Tony shrugged. "We all got weaknesses, Hulk is a rage machine, Cap isn't with the program, your brother thinks he's all that and a bag of chips, Natasha's human, and so is Clint," he said, then looked up. "Do you have one?"

"A weakness?" Loki asked. "I am unsure. If I do, I have yet to find it," he said with a smile.

Loki nodded but didn't move to interfere or speak as Tony finished the rest of the process and snapped the reactor back into place with a wince as the housing grated against his ribs when he clicked it. He wiped the area around the housing with a cloth, and when he looked up, Loki was gone, the usual traces of green mist floating on the air. He shook his head and sighed, standing up and shrugging into his shirt. Tony was completely confused. Loki had no reason to keep showing up, yet he did.

"Sir, the reactor is in catastrophic cascade failure..." JARVIS said then stopped. "Correction, arc reactor is functioning nominally."

Tony froze, looking down at his chest, where he caught the barest traces of green among the brilliant blue from the reactor. Had Loki had fixed it? He stumbled into the seat and steadied himself. A catastrophic cascade failure while he was disconnected from it would have killed him. Granted, it would probably have been close if he was connected to the thing. He had no idea what might have caused that in the first place, but he had to find out before it happened again.

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Another few months passed without Tony seeing his green clad visitor. Though, it seemed, strange events continually surrounded him. The building that would have left Tony comatose for a week happened to fall the opposite way to defy explanation, as well as physics. The failing repulsor that suddenly decided to work at the last minute despite the fact that it had a disconnected wire. The strange green glow that he caught out of the corner of his eye now and then. The time he knew he had been knocked unconscious at least three hundred feet up and woke up on the ground. He didn't know for sure, of course, it could be nothing, luck maybe. Everyone asked how such things happened, but he would just shrug his apparent luck off to the others as his guardian angel on his shoulder. As usual, he said it with snark and charm.

It had been another one of those weeks where he'd avoided sleep like the plague. Nightly flashbacks of all the things that still terrorized him kept assaulting him the moment he closed his eyes. The reason for the nightmares was simple; Pepper and he had called it quits again and he was back to sleeping alone. When she was there, he could usually sleep, but in the times they were apart, he just couldn't get past the memories and thoughts. He would try to sleep but ended up sucking down coffee, usually with more than a little Irish Cream in it.

Then today, there had been another "Steve event" as Tony called them.

The "Steve events" were when Tony did something that he knew had to be done, but he was berated by the team captain for not following orders to do it. Tony continually reminded them he wasn't a soldier, in fact, according to SHIELD he was an 'advisor' and not even a member of the Avengers Initiative even though they used all his gadgets and his tower. This would lead to another argument on Tony's refusal to accept authority. This generally descended into Tony flipping off "Captain Tightpants" and hiding in his shop working on the toys they demanded of him.

This time, his "arrogance" as Steve put it had led to Clint getting injured when the building he was on collapsed because Tony missed coming around to shoot down the AIM UAV that had him targeted. Apparently, they missed the fact that despite that tidbit, he'd saved the rest of them by diverting and taking out the larger UAV that had been coming overhead with a higher yield bomb that would have decimated the better part of seven blocks around them. Steve's response was he should have reported in and let someone else take it and do what he was ordered to do. He could not get Steve to understand that based on trajectory and speed no one else could have gotten to it in time. Steve said JARVIS hadn't computed that so he had no way to know. Tony had calculated it already, in his head, but no one seemed to remember that he was capable of outthinking his own computer systems.

Add onto that that everyone this week also wanted the impossible; he was not in the mood for anything but sweet oblivion.

So, with guilty conscious because he had gotten Clint put into the med bay with a broken ankle and concussion by not doing what Steve said, he decided to do what he always did. He tried to drink himself into that oblivion. He was sitting in the middle of his shop surrounded by schematics of various things and a nearly empty bottle of scotch in his hand. He was drunker than he had been in a long time; of course to get there it had taken a fifth of scotch and half a bottle of Jack.

"You are highly inebriated, Anthony," Loki said from behind Tony. Tony looked over to see Loki kneeling beside the papers on the floor and looking about with interest. He was back in the black trousers and loose green shirt again, and his hair was tied back. Tony wondered if he'd tell him what the difference in his dress was. He might have asked if he hadn't been so drunk.

"No shit, Bambi," he said, swigging from the bottle.

“Do humans not drink in merriment among each other?” Loki asked.

Tony snorted in response. “Hum, I’ve heard that, I drink to shut the fucking thoughts in my brain off. And to forget for a minute how fucking worthless I am.”

Loki frowned. “Really. What does that mean, Anthony?”

Tony looked up with bleary eyes, both bloodshot and with deep black circles under them. “Fucking worthless son of a great man!” he said, holding up his bottle and glaring at the nearly empty contents. “Fucking nothing without the suit, that’s what I am,” he said with a sigh. “Can’t follow orders, can’t make things work in time, might as well just fucking drink until I fucking die of alcohol poisoning, though I’d have to drink a lot more to do that...” he said sadly, looking over to the small wet bar and thinking of going to get the bottle of amaretto he kept under there for Pepper.

Loki leaned forward and put a hand on Tony’s head, and Tony slumped over into sleep. He stared at him, and used his magic to clear the alcohol out of his body. Loki picked him up and laid him on the leather sofa and sat down by him and stared for a long moment before curiosity got the best of him and he leaned forward and laid a hand on his head again, closing his glowing green eyes and finding the memories that had come to the surface of his mind. He’d seen much of what happened already, but there were reasons behind Tony’s actions. He wanted to know them.

“I can’t deal with you anymore, Tony. I love you, I do, but I’m better off as your friend than I am your girlfriend,” Pepper said sadly. She was standing by the windows with a clipboard in her hands. “I know we’ve done this so many times Tony, but this time, I don’t think I’ll come back. I love you so much, but...Happy and I are seeing each other, and he makes me very happy,” she said, turning back to face him.

Tony looked up from his work, a car motor he’d taken apart. “Okay, Pep, I just want you to be happy,” he said, smiling at her, but inside his heart was breaking. At least she and Happy could be together and have a good life. Happy could give her the things Tony could not, and Tony could still give her everything that she needed that money could buy, so it was good. That’s what he told himself.

(shift)

“Tony, for godssakes, can you listen?” Steve yelled into the com link.

Tony, in his suit, nearly fell out of the sky as the repulsors on his left side flitted on and off. He didn’t have time to explain to them what he was doing, he didn’t even realize what he’d done until it was done, but the action had ended with him nearly crushed inside the suit. His left side was numb and JARVIS was going on about there being damage to the suit.

“Cap, I can’t explain right now,” he said. After the mission would be another wonderful “Steve event” he knew.

He got to the ground and dropped the kid he’d grabbed out of the building before taking off again. She ran toward her family and Tony waved as he took off in a halting fashion. Damn, it would take days to fix this.

“You can’t just do stuff like this, Tony! I told you to head to the right, not the left because the building was collapsing!” Cap continued into the com. Definite “Steve event” on the way. Tony sighed. He wasn’t going to bother; they weren’t going to even listen to him anyway.

(shift)

"Tony, did you finish those arrows?" Clint asked, leaning against the door and looking into the lab.

He looked up. "Um, yeah, on the list, bird boy," he said, waving him off as he tried to fix the faulty connection in the 33 that kept causing it to disconnect from the arc. He really was going to kill himself if he didn't figure out what was causing it. Losing power at thirty thousand would not be a good idea.

"Dude, you've been working on them three weeks, what's taking so long?" Clint asked with a frown. "You just down here fucking around with your suits again? Really, you know, you can't be of much help if we can't fight at least at your level in the tin can."

Tony looked up. "I'll have them tomorrow, they have to fabricate overnight," he said, looking up and putting down the piece from his suit and looking at the arrows and guns laid out in process for Clint and Natasha.

"Great! Thanks, Tony!" he said with a grin and left.

Tony glared at the guns for Natasha too beside the arrows. She'd been complaining that she could have used them on her mission yesterday. He sighed and picked up the schematic for the arrows, and pulled up his list on the monitor. Five projects for Fury, six for Stark Industries, and twenty six for the Avengers were in the to do list. Almost all were marked priority one. He sighed. He guessed that sleeping would be off that list for the next week or so...

(shift)

"Rhodey, I don't have time for this right now," Tony said, grabbing a coffee cup from the kitchen. It was morning and the sun was streaming into the upper tower. Tony hadn't slept the night before trying to finish one of Fury's "immediate" projects for the helicarrier engines.

"Tony, I need that project done on the UAV design, what are you doing? It's not like you have been doing anything for Stark Industries lately. Pepper says she can't pry you out of the lab and playing with your toys down there. She can't even get you to go to meetings," he said, shaking his head.

Tony started to speak and shook his head. It wouldn't do any good to explain what he'd been working on. "I'll do what I can, Rhodey, but..."

"Tony, you know the government looks the other way right now because of what you do for them, but if you can't deliver...I can't keep them off your case. I mean, they're happy you gave me the War Machine suit, but they don't like you being rogue without them to regulate what you do," he said with a sigh.

Tony rolled his eyes. "I'll get on it, Rodey, okay?"

Rhodey smiled. "Good."

Loki removed his hand. Interesting, he thought, and was gone into greenish shadows.

-oooooooo-OOOOOO-oooooooo-

Tony was in the med bay again. This time, though, Bruce didn't know what to do. Tony's hands had been crushed on their last mission and he wasn't sure he could fix them. They'd had a mission to deal with an AIM facility, and of course, Tony had headed things off. He ended up getting trapped when the basement caved in. It seemed as though his arc reactor had set off a trap designed just for him and the whole place came crashing down. His suit had held up as well as could be

expected, but his hands had been trapped under a slab of concrete that had taken the hulk and Steve together to move. They weren't sure he'd ever use them again. They joked among themselves so much for Tony's guardian angel. They were so sure that if Tony was awake, he'd make the same joke. It sounded like such a Tony thing to do, of course. They didn't understand, of course.

They had to keep him sedated completely, because every time he woke up he'd freak out on them, and Bruce feared his heart wouldn't take the stress. If it hadn't been for the arc reactor, he might have been more sure of the outlook, but he just didn't know with all the stress Tony's heart was already under... He also feared that Tony would hurt someone in that state. He tended to come to swinging. He wasn't sure what to do, and fell asleep in the chair beside him.

Bruce had no idea that Tony's problem didn't have to do so much with his hands than the fact they'd left him restrained to keep him from leaving the bay. Bruce didn't think that Tony was bothered by that, he had no idea that the position he was restrained in echoed one he'd been in before. Of course, no one bothered to ask Tony when he panicked what exactly he was panicking over, they simply decided it best to let him sleep through the worst of it. He looked as though he could use it anyway. Nobody asked why about that either.

Bruce woke to something green flashing in the room. He blinked and came awake with a start, frowning and got up to check on Tony. He knew something was different, so he turned on the lights, and found Tony's hands were healed completely, in fact, other than his arc reactor, he had no injuries and he was waking up despite the heavy sedation. Both the wrist and leg restraints had been broken by something incredibly strong.

"Bruce?" Tony asked, pushing himself to sit up and staring at his hands. "You did it?" he asked quietly. He remembered his hands being crushed and he remembered a flash of green but then there was Bruce and Steve trying to figure out how to free him. Everything else was hazy. He remembered snatches of nightmares and feeling scared beyond belief and trapped, unable to breathe.

Bruce shook his head. "I didn't..."

JARVIS chimed in quietly, "Sir, I detected a..."

Tony smiled to himself, his eyes distant. "Yeah, JARVIS, I figured that out."

Bruce looked at Tony with a confused face. "I don't understand what just happened, Tony, but you do, don't you?"

Tony smirked; still tired it seemed and laid back down. "Just my guardian angel, guess he was running late," he muttered before fading off to sleep. Bruce stared at him for a long time.

"JARVIS, what does that mean?" he asked.

"I'm unsure what Sir is referring to, Dr. Banner," JARVIS responded without missing a beat.

The mystery would remain for a while. Bruce told the others, and none of them could figure out what had possibly caused such a thing. Thor commented that it would seem to him a healer of some sort had magically healed his hands, such things he had seen in Asgard, and he knew that there were earth sorcerers, so perhaps there was someone helping Tony. They told Thor about Tony's unusual luck, though it didn't seem to follow him all the time. Especially since he ended up getting his hands crushed and almost killed. JARVIS was no help, simply stating he did not know what they were talking about, that there were no unauthorized visitors to the tower on record. Tony said that he couldn't remember anything about it. He was just glad his hands were fine.

He knew better though. He felt it, the remains of the warmth that he was beginning to recognize as magic. Magic, which he hated so much, was coursing through his body and soul, and he was beginning to want more of it. He was beginning to crave it.

-oooooooo-OOOOOO-ooooooo-

Steve and Tony continued to butt heads on a daily basis, though. “Steve events” had started to happen after almost every mission. Steve had issues with his tendency to go rogue, as he put it, and not stick with the strategy he put in place. Tony tried to explain that he tried to do that but there was more to it than Steve understood. Once again, the mission had gone slightly bad, though this time no one had been hurt, but the fault was given to Tony for not listening to Steve. It had regressed into Steve telling Tony that Howard would be disappointed in his son, and that he was nothing but a spoiled rich child. Tony played it off and told him that’s the way daddy raised him and left it at that, but no one else saw him clutching his chest in the elevator at the radiating pain. He had to get ready for the event that night anyway.

The event had been to honor Stark Industries for all the work they were doing for the city. Tony, of course, had to speak, and Pepper as well. As a special guest, Steve had prepared a speech, as one of the few people to have fresh memories of Howard Stark and that era. The Avengers were invited, of course, though they didn’t have to speak. Everyone was excited, though for Tony, things went downhill drastically when Steve began to talk about Howard.

Tony tried his best, he really, truly did. He tried to stay in his seat and listen as Steve went on and on about what a great man Howard Stark was, about what a benefit to the world he had been, and it just became too much for him. Tony found himself practically running from his seat, to the speaker’s right hand and in front of everyone, no less. He hit the door to the bathroom and vomited everything he’d had that day, which mostly amounted to drinking his calories from a whiskey bottle. Steve didn’t *know* Howard Stark, not like Tony did.

Eventually Bruce came in to check on him, and Tony told him that it had been bad sushi earlier today, but he didn’t think he believed him. They were at a break for the second set of speeches anyway after Steve had finished. He stepped outside and found everyone waiting on him.

“Uh, sorry, bad round of sushi, I think,” he said, his face obviously flushed and sweaty.

Pepper frowned, looking at him. She’d noticed that he seemed to be declining in health since she’d stopped staying at the tower. She’d asked the others but they played it off that he was just being Tony and not to worry. “You sure you are alright, Tony?” she asked. “Happy can take you back to the tower.”

He shook his head. “No, I think I’m okay now,” he said with a strained smile.

Clint snorted. “Sure you just didn’t drink too much on an empty stomach?” he asked.

Tony rolled his eyes, “Shut up, bird brain, go crawl back into your nest,” he muttered and took his place back beside the podium and picked at the food that was given. He wasn’t sure he could eat. He glanced around, feeling like he was being watched and shook his head. He could hear the tabloids already. Tony Stark is looking poor, is he addicted to drugs? Is he back on the bottle? Will he go to rehab?

Pepper was the next to speak, and going after Steve and talking about Stark Industries under Howard Stark, she was speaking of the next part, which was Obadiah Stane. Tony bit hard into his lip as she started talking about the good work he did before the end when he let hubris and jealousy get in the way of the true path for Stark Industries. Tony dabbed at his forehead already feeling the

sweat bead again, and he was wishing desperately that he hadn't even taken bites out of the food that came by. His stomach was threatening to reject even that. Pepper went on to talk about the changes in Stark Industries and what Tony had done for it. He didn't hear most of it through the buzzing in his ears. There was another break and Pepper leaned over to him again.

"Tony, you still aren't looking well," she said, frowning and patting his hand.

"Just not feeling that great, Pep," he said, rubbing his forehead.

"Please tell me you aren't hung over?" she said, a sadness tinging her voice and Tony shook his head. He couldn't handle the pitying tone of voice right now.

The rest of the night went on and he shot out of the place like it was on fire, much to the annoyance to everyone. Too many thoughts were running through his head, too many memories of things he'd rather forget. So, he ended up in his lab, drinking fast and hard to try and chase them away.

"What this time?" a smooth familiar voice said from behind him. Tony didn't flinch, and almost found relief in the fact he was there.

Tony turned and saw Loki meandering around the shop again. He'd grown so used to him popping in unexpectedly. "What do ya mean?" he said softly as he slid down into his couch.

"You only drink yourself into a stupor when you are upset greatly, Anthony. What happened this time?" he asked, moving toward him.

Tony shook his head. "Why do you care? Nothing important. Just like me."

Loki nodded and stepped up to him and once more pressed a hand to his head, sending him to sleep. "You are so destructive of yourself, Anthony Stark," he said. "Why is that? What drives you to destroy and degrade yourself so much?"

Once more, Loki's magic reached out and felt for the things that had driven him to this state. Things were muddled as he removed the poisons from his blood, but it wasn't the alcohol that muddled them.

"But father!" a little dark haired boy said with tears streaming down his face asked a bigger man.

"It's garbage! How dare you think this is worthy of the Stark name?" the older man said, brushing a table clear of various parts and tools. Howard Stark, the name attached to the dark haired man.

"But...it works! I just need to..." he said, the young Tony, Loki realized.

Before the boy could look up, his father backhanded him, sending him to the ground. "Trash! Do better, you disgust me!" he said and stormed out, leaving the boy collecting the pieces of whatever he'd made and piling them together.

(shift)

"You're nothing but a spoiled rich kid, you don't belong here!"

An older Tony Stark stood in the hall of some sort of school. He was a young teenager. He stared at the taller boy or man that was yelling and snarling at him. He looked to be almost twenty. For a younger kid, Tony glared at him with a look that rivaled adults.

"I belong here, just because I'm younger than you doesn't mean shit. I'm here because I'm smarter

than any of you.”

“Your daddy’s money got you here, nothing else,” another boy said, staring at him. “You’ll see, we’ll teach you what you are. Fourteen year old brats don’t belong here, you’ll see,” he said, slapping the armload of books out of Tony’s arms. He turned and left him alone to pick up scattered books.

Tony knelt down and gathered them and walked away, his back rigid and his jaw tight.

(shift)

“But I’m top of the class!” a Tony that was a few years older said with wide dark eyes, wearing a too big t-shirt and a pair of shorts that obviously didn’t belong to him. The person who stood in front of him was his father, beside him stood his mother.

“You can’t dictate everything about my life!” he said, crossing his thin arms over his body.

“You will cease this, Anthony Stark. I will not have it known that my son is a....a....gay boy!” he said, eyes wide and shaking his head. “You have a company to run, a legacy to continue!”

Tony frowned. “I’m not gay!” he said, glancing back at the bed where Charlie was very still. “I’m bi.” He said, sighing and looking down.

“Doesn’t matter what you are, no son of mine is going to be caught bedding with another man!” he said, grabbing Tony by the arm and backhanding him. His mother flinched and looked away. “You’re going back to your dorm, and if I hear of you seeing him, or anyone like him again, I’ll press charges against him for statutory. You’re not seventeen yet, Tony, I can see him put in jail for a very long time.”

He threw Tony back from him and turned and left. Tony’s mother looked back with a sad smile and waved. Tony stood up, wiping blood from his mouth as the taller, dark skinned boy came out from under the sheets that he’d been staying in and wrapped his arms around him and whispered to him something and Tony turned and returned the gesture.

(shift)

“Here Tony,” an older man with silver hair said. Tony was sitting at a bar, and the man handed him a shot glass. He stared it.

“Obie, I’m not old enough to drink,” he said, looking up at him.

“It’s okay, boy, you lost your parents today, and if anyone needs it you do.”

The glass kept being refilled again and again until the seventeen year old couldn’t stand without help. The silver haired man smiled in a way that was wrong. He manhandled him into a bedroom and threw him down onto a bed with bright blue covers. The sky was not so bright.

Tony turned his head and frowned. “Obie...not m’bed...this’s yers...” he mumbled, trying to get up but the older man shoved him back onto the bed again.

“Now, Tony,” he said, crawling on after him. “You’ll be a good boy, won’t you? Imagine my surprise when your dad called me irate because he caught you having a nice, big black boy fuck you into the wall when he came and visited by surprise last year. Hmm, if I’d known you liked fat cocks I would’ve done this sooner,” he said, pulling at Tony’s trousers with his heavy hands. “We could have had a lot of fun before you went off to MIT...”

"No, what...Obie," he muttered, his mind clouded but not enough that he didn't realize what was happening as his god father's hands went places he knew they shouldn't be. He screamed to be let go but it didn't do any good.

Loki blinked, removing his hand. "How...disgusting..." he said, disappearing again, but with a definite plan in mind the next time something like this happened.

Emerald Salvation

Chapter Notes

So revamped second chapter which is really the second half of the first chapter.

First chapter has been rewritten and this is the second half/continuation from the first chapter. Thanks to you people, my one shot is now a multichapter with a plotline. Look what you did.

This chapter may be getting some more editing but I had to post it tonight to get it done.

Loki sat in his cell quietly reading another book, legs crossed at his ankles as he rested on the bed. He looked for all the world to be cool, calm, and completely at peace. That couldn't have been farther from the truth. He'd just returned once more a few hours ago and it had taken all his will power not to destroy every book in his cell. He looked up as Thor walked up outside the cell.

"Brother," Thor said, nodding to him. His eyes glanced around the cell.

"What is it, Thor?" Loki said with a sigh, shutting the book and looking up at his brother with the most innocent look he could present to his annoying elder brother.

"Please, tell me, is it you?" he asked, staring at him, eyes wide and open. Loki could see no malice in them, and he knew that Thor wasn't trying to trick him into revealing something. Still, to be safe he shook his head.

"What are you talking about, Thor?" he said, sighing at him as if he were the dumbest creature in the worlds. Sometimes, he was relatively sure that Thor had been dropped off the Bifost as an infant.

Thor frowned at him, his eyes narrowing in that way that Loki knew was him considering everything Loki was doing. "Are you going to Midgard somehow?" he said.

Loki rolled his eyes expressively. "And how would I do that," he said, gesturing around him to the cell. "I have no magic in here, and I can't very well escape the scrutiny of the guards. Besides, you come by at least once a day to make sure I am in my cell and I have never been missing."

Loki watched his brother. He looked very much unsure even with the evidence Loki presented him with. Thor nodded slowly. "Someone is visiting the Man of Iron, someone who can heal him and aid him. And it gives me pause."

Loki shook his head. "And how would I manage that, Thor? Why would you think I would do something like heal someone I tried very hard to kill, anyway?"

"Because, Brother, that wasn't you. That was the Tesseract, and whatever was done to you in the Void that you refuse to speak on. You were fascinated by the Son of Stark from the beginning since you could not control him with the power the item gave you," he said, looking at him

seriously.

Loki shook his head. “I cannot leave the cell, Thor.”

Thor looked at him for a long moment then turned to leave. Loki smiled after him, opening his book again and resuming the reading he was doing. He paused and felt something pull at his mind. It was the connection between him and Anthony Stark.

Loki didn’t know how it happened. After he had been returned to Asgard, and the influence of the Tesseract had faded, he started to get strange sensations. He saw glimpses of the world of Midgard, and they centered around Stark. That was how it began. He had closed his eyes and simply concentrated on the image and when he opened them he stood in his workshop. Behind, he had left an illusionary copy of himself. He should not have been able to do it, the cell was supposed to bind all his magic powers. That meant that whatever was allowing him to travel to Tony’s side was outside of his magical powers and came from elsewhere.

After that first visit, he didn’t intend to return. He could find no reason that he would be drawn to the man. Then the first time an overwhelming need overcame him happened and he had appeared in the bath as Tony exited. He started to put together that it was whenever the pull between them told him that Tony was distressed greatly. He’d been researching it among the books he was given access too. The more he looked the more his suspicions were confirmed. It was almost certainly a soul bind. He couldn’t tell if it was artificial in origin or natural, and he wasn’t sure if it was something applied by an outside force magically or something that had just happened.

However, the part that he was worried about was that no matter what type of soul binding it was, the death of one would affect the other exponentially. The damage would be greater if there was an unnatural cause, and if it happened early in the lifespan, it could kill the other. He didn’t like that prospect; so to ensure his own safety, he’d kept ahead of things that happened to him. The small bits of luck he bestowed on him had pure selfish intent.

But then, something happened. The more he delved into the memories, the more he began to realize it might indeed be a natural link. Something had happened during their meeting in the tower, something transferred, and he was sure the Tesseract had something to do with it. He wasn’t sure what, but it had to have done something. Perhaps it had forged the link, or perhaps it only highlighted what was already there. He couldn’t be sure unless he was allowed freedom to research and test these things without interference and without the blocks on his magic. The visits to Midgard seemed to end as soon as he was satisfied of Anthony’s safety.

Anthony Stark, more intelligent than his fellows, but constantly berated and bullied for that very intelligence, was much like Loki. As a child he too had suffered at the hands of the others because of his abilities. Loki was also far more intelligent than Thor and his fellows. Both shared having a father that had been dismissive, and both had endured torture and torment at the hands of others.

He stood suddenly, the book dropping off his lap with a crash. “Thor!” he called, hoping that his brother hadn’t left the hall yet. A second later, the blond head of hair showed up again, his eyes wide and surprised.

“Brother, what is it?” he asked.

“Anthony is in dire trouble, he is dying,” he said, eyes unfocused. “I must help him,” he said, looking at Thor as he disappeared, leaving no illusion behind this time. He didn’t have time. This time, however, he had left Thor to witness what happened. He knew once he was gone Thor would go to Odin or Frigga, but they would confirm what Loki had already figured out on his own. None of them could punish him for this. This was something beyond even the hands of Odin.

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To be honest, the week had sucked, again. Lately, Tony's weeks had a tendency to suck all the time. Tony had been at odds with everyone at some point or other. Steve had been on his case nonstop, and Pepper and Rhodey had even been bothering him about projects for Stark Industries and government assignments and obligations. Clint was perhaps the only one this week he wasn't irritated with. Even Bruce had managed to piss him off already, and Natasha was just in an incredibly foul mood that he didn't understand. Worst of all, though, was what had just happened.

He'd run low on coffee in the middle of putting together the latest prototype of a biobed that he was scheduled to drop off at Stark Medical the next day. He had to get it finished no matter how much everyone else whined about how important their needs were. He'd already handed everyone a limitless bankcard to use to alleviate some of his problems. Perhaps the Ferrari that Clint picked up was a little much, but at this point, if it kept him happy and off his case, he didn't really care. He was about walk into the kitchen when he heard voices from the common room.

He was thinking of actually being social and going in to say hello but as he got closer he froze.

"I know, but the technology is something we need on the team. You guys gotta admit, Tony's suits come in pretty damn handy," Clint said. "I mean, he has a suit for everything."

Steve cleared his throat. "Yeah, but Clint, we can't rely on him. He doesn't follow orders, I mean, you ended up laid up for six weeks because he couldn't follow one simple directive! And how many times has he ended up in the med bay because he didn't listen?"

"I don't want to see him get killed," Pepper said quietly. "I mean, it would break my heart if something happened to him." Tony's throat tightened. "I love him more than I can say, but he's self-destructive. He doesn't have any regard for his own well-being whatsoever, and that's why I gave up being his lover and went to just being his friend."

There was a pause. "Look, there's only one option, don't let him go on missions with us," Natasha said with a sigh. "Now, now, don't look at me like that. What choice do we have? He's been drinking way too much lately, and who knows if he'll even be in any condition to fight if we have a serious issue?"

"I've been patching him up way more than I'd like," Bruce said quietly. "And his alcoholism is getting out of hand. I honestly think he's drunk more than he's sober these days."

Tony's hand tightened around the tablet he was holding. The schematics for the biobed were on it and he'd been refining the last touches as he came up. "But we need him and the suit," Clint argued.

"No, we need the suit," Steve said. "It doesn't matter who it is in the suit."

"You can't be serious? You just can't expect him to hand his suits over to someone else," Clint said, surprised by the comment.

"Rhodey has a suit, and he can pilot the others, so I'm sure if it happened that you needed one of them, you could call him in, but honestly, his suits are all run by JARVIS, there isn't much to using them. I hate to say it, but it might be the best solution," Pepper said, quietly.

"If we do this, we should really see about getting him to go into an in house rehabilitation program," Bruce said. "He's coming apart and we obviously can't help him. Committing him may be better to get him off the booze."

Tony's eyes widened. They wanted to force him into rehab? To cure the drinking problem they gave him? What sort of hellish irony was this? No, they were right he was weak, and he couldn't stop it. Worthless, weak, and useless, that was Tony Stark.

"I'm just going to tell Fury to revoke his advisor status. I mean, it isn't like he's ever been made a full Avenger. He's unreliable, unstable, and a danger to everyone around him. I think it's time..."

Tony stepped back and let Steve's words trail off. He slowly put the tablet on the table and turned back the way he'd come. It was a last straw sort of thing. He didn't even remember walking through the lab to his cars and getting in the flame red sports car that he favored when he was upset. Before he knew it, he was in it and he just drove and drove and drove. He didn't have a suit, he didn't have a phone, in fact, he didn't have anything. He just wanted to get as far and as fast away as he could. He ignored JARVIS's voice coming from the car's console.

He didn't notice the tears. He just kept pressing on the accelerator, the world speeding past him at a rapid pace. Fifty miles an hour, sixty, seventy, eighty, ninety, one hundred, one hundred ten. He didn't notice the road was blurring and he was losing control. One hundred twenty. One twenty five. He didn't notice the drop off. One thirty. He didn't notice the world pausing and falling away with a spiraling feeling that was mildly pleasant. And that was when the world went black.

Sometime later he came to wakefulness and managed to stumble out of the wrecked car and looked back at it, surprised, and very disappointed, that he was alive. He supposed if he wanted to finish it, he could remove the arc, would be easy and no mess way to die, and poetic in a way. The thought made him shiver though. He couldn't do that. He wouldn't do that. It was too vivid a memory of when Obie took it out and he nearly died. No, he wouldn't do that. He was going to finish it some other way, some way that might mean something to him and everyone around him. Some way that maybe would make someone listen to what he couldn't put into words.

His head was buzzing, and he was sure he had a concussion, and quite possibly a broken arm, but he ignored it. His left leg was numb, and the bone was jutting from his thigh, but he didn't bother with it since he couldn't really feel it. He turned to the wreck and picked up a piece of glass and nodded. That would do it, he thought, sliding down to sit with his back to the smoking car. He wondered if it would catch fire. He looked at the glass and realized it was a piece of the rearview mirror. Fitting, he thought, as he watched the sliver of glass peel back the flesh on his arm. It was kind of pretty, he thought, watching the red flow out and down his arm. It looked like the Iron Man suit's paint, he thought with a smile, watching the liquid drip down to the dusty ground. He stared at the sky, bright in the afternoon sun. Not a bad way to go out, he thought to himself, as he closed his eyes. Just as he thought things would end there, he saw a flash of green and he wondered if his guardian angel had come back for him one last time.

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"So you're telling me, Loki, who is supposed to be locked in a magic proof cell in Asgard, turned up in the med bay with Tony, half dead, and healed him and disappeared again?" Fury said. "And you are telling me he's the one that healed his hands before as well? And may have been the cause of the other incidents you reported happening around Tony?"

Steve nodded. "That's what happened, if I hadn't seen it, I wouldn't believe it."

Fury rubbed his forehead. "Okay, what the hell happened to him that he needed to be healed?"

Steve and Bruce exchanged glances. "We're not really sure, he wouldn't let me near him," Bruce said quietly. "He said that it was our fault, and that he would be back to deal with the cause of it. When he left, he had no injuries left and I couldn't find any trace of what there had been."

Thor came into the conference room and sat down looking very confused. “So, Thor, what did you find out?” Fury asked. “Your brother is up to something, and I doubt it is good even if he did save Tony’s life for some unknown reason.

“Loki has admitted that he has been visiting Tony over the last six months or so. He was the cause of several of the instances of ‘luck’ that Tony attributed to a guardian angel. He says Tony spoke with him on the occasions he showed himself. Otherwise he appeared either invisible or as a person on the street. He is a shapeshifter, so he could have been among us at any time, even as an animal as my brother does enjoy animal forms,” he said softly.

“Wait, that means he’s in more trouble, right?” Natasha said. “He’s supposed to be imprisoned indefinitely, so doesn’t this qualify as breaking out of jail or something?” she said.

Thor nodded. “I spoke with the all father and Loki has broken no law of Asgard in what he has done,” he said quietly, looking at them.

The Avengers looked at each other. “What? He’s been escaping and that doesn’t break the laws of Asgard? How isn’t that breaking a law?” asked Steve.

Thor exhaled. “This has turned into something that is much more complex than it was. Loki is doing what he must. No prison can contain a Jotun or Aesir that has been soul bound to another being. The power isn’t even something that he can direct. Somehow, Loki’s soul has been bound to the Man of Iron’s, and when he is in danger, Loki’s soul magic brings him to Friend Tony.”

“Soul bound?” Fury asked. “What does that mean?”

“Our Mother is discussing it with Loki, who is currently in Asgard, of course. He returned when his duty to the Man of Iron was completed. He is irate, and cannot be calmed and refused to see me, claiming that I have fault in this situation as well. Father is seriously considering his request to be released from his prison in light of the current situation...” he said and there was a pop and Loki was standing beside his brother.

“Brother!” Thor said, turning to him. “Father allowed you to leave?”

“He did. It seems that the proof I gave him of why I needed to come to Midgard was enough to satisfy him,” he said, looking coolly around the table at the Avengers and Fury. “You. You who would be his friends. I have no need of you and if Anthony would not be displeased I would obliterate you each from the whole of existence without a second thought and be well within my rights to do so.”

Thor looked shocked. “Brother! What is this talk? What are you saying? For this to be within your rights, that would have to mean...” Thor stopped with his mouth hanging agape and looked up at him.

Loki turned to Thor and shook his head. “You are the biggest idiot of all, Thor, can you not see?”

He put a hand to Thor’s arm and a green glow surrounded them both and they disappeared. They reappeared in the med bay where they had put Tony and sedated him for the time being until they could figure out what had happened. Considering they had no idea what Loki was doing with Tony, or what magics he had used, they feared that he could be dangerous to them. They believed him possibly to be under Loki’s control as he had controlled others in the past.

“See, Brother, look what they have done. I healed him, this has no purpose, there is no reason for him to be unconscious,” he said, touching him and letting him wake.

“Loki?” Tony asked as his eyes fluttered open and he gasped to feel that his hands were bound.

“Wait,” Loki said, gesturing and releasing the restraints from him. Tony swung his feet over and sat up, rubbing his hands over his head.

“Why’re you here again...” he muttered, looking away. “You saved me, didn’t you? Why’d you do something like that? I did it myself, I didn’t want to be saved,” he said quietly.

Loki nodded. “I did. And now I will see what drove you to such lengths,” he said, placing a hand to Tony’s head again, closing his eyes and letting the memories wash over him.

Tony stared at him vacantly as he did it. This was the first time Tony had experienced the process awake and as the whole day came cascading down over him in moments, he decided he did not like this at all. He choked and put both hands to his chest, gasping for breath as the panic tried to take him over. Loki removed his hand and stared at him for a moment. He reached out and picked him up from the table and deposited onto the floor, surprising both Thor and Tony. He then reached down, grabbing him by the hand and grabbing Thor’s arm with his other hand and they disappeared and reappeared in conference room again.

Tony looked completely confused, barefoot in a set of blue pajamas, as he looked around. His eyes fell on the others, Bruce, Steve, Natasha, Clint and Fury, all of which were staring at him with questioning looks as he struggled to recover his balance completely from whatever transportation method that was.

“Loki, what...where...what have you done...” he stated before Loki looked at him and shook his head.

“No, Anthony,” he said, still holding his hand in a vice grip though he’d released Thor.

“You,” he said looking at those in the room. “You all don’t deserve to have him with you. You who would abuse his abilities and intellect, and still berate him for things beyond his control.”

Tony stared up at Loki. He was incredibly imposing considering that Tony was barefoot. He had no idea what he was talking about.

“I’ve been coming here for over six months. And in that time I have seen you all take what he has to offer, and I have seen you want more and I have seen him break down to such a degree that I had to step in. I’ve lived his nightmares, I’ve walked his dreams, and I’ve absorbed his memories. I’ve stood beside him as you convince him that he isn’t worth the sparse attention you pay to him. You know nothing. And Anthony is no longer your pawn,” Loki said, smiling in a way that Thor knew beyond a doubt meant trouble.

“Brother, what are you...” he started.

“You want to know what I’ve seen?” he asked, looking around and he felt Tony’s hand tremble. He looked at him and back at the others. “I’ve seen a little boy who had his father beat him for not being good enough when he did things that most adults could not do. I’ve seen a teenager who struggled and fought his way through being the youngest person in his school among adults. I’ve seen a boy who had a father who would not accept him, in any fashion except for that which he desired. I’ve seen a boy who struggled to find someone that wanted him. I’ve seen a boy that was taken advantage of it too many ways,” Loki said.

“Please, Loki, don’t,” Tony said, his eyes going wide realizing what he’d seen. “No...no, don’t...that’s...”

Loki looked at him, pulling him closer and holding his hand up. “You don’t wish them to know?” Tony shook his head. “Why not, Anthony? Why do you hide these terrors that have chased you since you were a boy? They will never accept you as it is, what does it matter if they hear the truth of their misdeeds, their mistrust and misgivings unfounded on lies and refusal to see what stands before their faces?” he said, eyes blazing green. Tony had no voice.

Enraged even further by his own words and Tony’s reluctance for them to know he arched swung his free arm out and thrust the memory of what Obadiah Stane had done into their minds. Tony didn’t know what happened, though, and he shook his head and looked as they all were staring at something that Tony couldn’t see. When they sat blinking and staring at Loki and Tony Loki continued his tirade.

“And then you wonder why this child would seek comfort in the arms of others? To find safety? To find someone that would not bring him harm? To make those horrible thing disappear from his mind? An amazing mind that cannot forget anything, or did you not notice the intensity of the memory I gave you?”

“No, Loki, what did you...you didn’t...” he started, looking between the team and Loki. “Stop, okay, enough, it...it isn’t their fault, I mean, come on, I just...I’m me, who wants to find out those sort of things, just...” he said trying to pull his hand out of Loki’s grip unsuccessfully.

Loki turned to look at him. “Quiet, Anthony, this is no longer in your control,” he said with ice to his voice.

Tony stopped pulling away from him and stared at him. “You’re gonna have to explain that one, Bambi,” he said, frowning.

“Five times now I’ve stopped you from taking your own life,” Loki said, glaring out at the group gathered. “Today you very nearly succeeded before I could get to you.”

Tony shook his head. “Five times?” he asked. “I’ve never...”

“Because I’ve appeared before the thoughts were finished forming. When I first came to you, you were on the verge of deciding. When I appeared in your bath, you had contemplated the straight razor. When I twice removed the alcohol from your blood that would have killed you. And today,” he said, turning his head back to the table of people who all, even Fury, were staring in utter shock at the scene before them.

“You were deciding to put him in someplace he did not want to go,” Loki said, looking at them. “You were going to take his suits and give them to others. You were going to use everything he had to give you but exclude him from everything.”

He turned to Steve. “You cannot even comprehend how much your words and deeds damages the man that grew from the child that used to see you as a hero. You idolize Howard Stark when he deserves no such idolatry. The man deserved a death far more painful than he received. You berate Anthony for not listening to your when his intellect is far beyond your own, and he processes information faster than he can speak to you. You wonder why he acts first? Because he has to do so,” he said, shaking his head at him. Steve said nothing, only turned a wide eyed gaze to Tony who was trying again to dislodge his hand from Loki’s.

“Come on, okay, um, yeah, okay, thanks for taking up my battle against Spangles, but can we please...stop...” he said.

“And you,” he said, turning to look at Bruce. “You spend your time admonishing him for his use of

technology yet you have no issues in taking advantage of it when it is convenient. You are no better than any here because you believe yourself to be more in tune with the natural world. You are not. You are a beast of rage. And you above all these others should have understood what Tony was going through. You are a healer. You did not take notice of what you should have,” he said and Bruce started to speak but Loki motioned with his hand and he stopped, seemingly unable to speak.

“No, I will take no words from any of you,” he said, turning next to Clint. “You chide and make fun of him for his past and you never knew how much you pained him each time because of it.” He looked to Natasha. “You, you are a woman in a profession of men, and you should have some sense of what it is like to be alone among a world against you. Instead of helping, your words are to stop whining. You never stopped to listen, and so many times he tried to tell you he needed your help.”

He looked around. “Are you satisfied that one of your own resorts to carving words into his arms to bleed to death on the side of a road to get your attention? That he should ask for help in his own flesh is a true disgrace for those that call themselves companions. Is this not what you would like to see?” he asked them all and held up Tony’s arm that he held and he allowed an image of what he’d found when

Tony stood still now, not trying to get away from Loki. He wanted to crawl into a hole and die, however, and Loki wasn’t letting him get out of this.

Loki didn’t see the things he was looking for in their faces, though. He didn’t see enough remorse, enough repentance. Not yet, at least. Thor put his hand on Loki’s shoulder.

“Loki, it is enough, please, just let us...” Thor began but Loki stopped him with a look.

“Shut up, Thor,” he said. “You are not innocent in this either. You in your arrogance could not take the time to even see the truth. Now, I’m taking what is mine, and I am leaving,” he said, turning to Thor and the blond god blinked.

Tony frowned and started to say something. “What...I don’t...Bambi, look, please explain...what’s that mean, what’s yours?”

Loki looked at him and smiled. “Time has come, Anthony. The journey is beginning anew, and it is time for me, for the first time, to enforce my position as a prince of Asgard as I see fit,” he said, yanking him in front of him and putting his hands on his shoulders and smiling at the others. “The red string of fate has connected us and shall not be separated, Anthony. I cannot leave you any longer,” he said, and they both disappeared in an emerald green mist.

Everyone stared for a moment. “Thor, what the hell just happened?” Clint asked.

Thor looked at them. “My brother, he...he’s taken Tony as his. The soul bond gives him the right to claim him as he sees fit...as a Prince of Asgard, he can’t be denied this claim.”

Steve blinked. “I don’t understand. As his? His claim?”

Thor sighed. “I spoke with my mother before I returned. Tony is bound to my brother. They are soul bound, soul mates, fated to be together for eternity. Somehow, despite the many hundreds of years my brother has lived, he has never encountered anyone that was bound to him. My mother believes that the Tesseract may have initiated the solidification of the bond when it, Tony and my brother were in proximity to each other. Because they are fated to be united, my brother has every right to take him as his own at any point. He could have done so the moment he figured out what

the bond was, but he chose to let Tony stay here.”

“Where’s he taken him?” Fury asked quietly.

Thor shook his head. “I’m assuming to Asgard, but I cannot be certain at this time. I must confer with my parents. As a Prince of Asgard, he is allowed to lay claim to any he wishes to wed. That claim is part of our ways. In a normal situation, the claim is not so clear cut. There are tests and approval from the parents of those in the courtship....”

“Courtship?” Bruce said. “You mean, you’re talking about him taking Tony as like...to marry him?”

Thor frowned. “Of course, why else would he do such a thing as claim him?”

Those at the table exchanged looks. “A servant, a slave, something of that nature, or apprentice even, but...” Natasha said quietly. “You’re saying that Loki wants to marry Tony?”

Thor looked at them. “You misunderstand. There is no marrying involved. Loki has claimed him, and the Man of Iron has no family to confer with. Mother and Father have approved Loki’s choice. It is done already. Friend Tony belongs to my brother, from now on. There will be a ceremony of sorts for our father to announce that my brother has taken a companion, but other than that, there is nothing more to be done.”

Fury’s brow furrowed. “Does Tony even know this? And he doesn’t get a choice?”

Thor looked at him. “He is soul bound to my brother. Friend Tony was never fated to have a choice in this, neither was my brother. Only the necessity of formality caused him to use the claiming process.”

There was a pop and Loki appeared beside Thor again. “Father wishes to see you,” he said to Thor.

“What have you done with Tony?” Steve asked, standing. “You can’t just force him to marry you.”

Loki arched a brow. “The deed is done, Steve Rogers. You, nor any of your merry band, can do anything. Tony is in the castle with my mother, if you must know. She is explaining the situation to him. Now, I have one more thing to do before I leave you to your own miserable existences.”

Loki held up his hand and a small black ball formed there and then from everywhere winding tendrils of black smoke seemed to be sucked up into the ball. He nodded, satisfied it seemed and placed it into a pouch.

“What was that?” Fury asked.

“JARVIS. I have removed the computer entity from all systems that he was attached to and instilled him into the receptacle. Now, another thing,” he said, and from far away they heard several explosions. Fury got up and saw smoke rising from Stark Tower. “All Tony’s suits have self-destructed. Including the ones he kept in Malibu. You will not have access to his creations. I will leave any gadgets Tony created for you; however, nothing will be accessible inside the tower. The upper, personal floors have been locked down and all your belongings have been transferred up here to the helicarrier.”

He turned to look at them and smiled. He put a hand on Thor’s arm and nodded to his brother then looked back at the Avengers. “Good day,” he said and disappeared with Thor.



Green
Angel's Light

Jade Vengeance

Tony stumbled again as they teleported. This time, though it was a whole lot different. He gasped and fell to his hands and knees as they appeared in a lavishly decorated room. There were thick drapes and furniture all around it in shades of green and gold.

“What the hell was that? I feel like I went through a blender,” he asked, sitting back on his knees and looking up at the distracted looking Loki.

“Bifrost, I used my magic to, as you Midgardians put it, ‘hitch a ride’ back to Asgard like I did to get to Midgard. Stay here, I’ve got something else to take care of,” he said, turning away.

Tony grabbed him by the cloak and yanked him back. He didn’t trust his legs yet. That was a hell of a ride. “Dammit, what’s going on, you can’t just...drop this on me and leave again! I don’t even know what the hell is going on! Where am I even at?”

Tony managed to get to his feet, though shakily. His equilibrium was completely off. Loki grabbed him and steadied him. “Here, sit,” he said, leading him to a sofa and getting him into the place. “First Bifrost is always a bit disorientating, especially when done the way I did things. It is a bit smoother when Heimdal is in control. My magic has been...unpredictable as of late.”

Tony didn’t like being manhandled but given it was that or sprawl on the floor he let Loki move him. He collected his thoughts and shook his head. “Okay, spill, Bambi, I need to know what just happened.”

Loki sighed. “I must complete a task; otherwise I fear I may never curry favor with you. Stay here. This is my chamber, no one will enter.”

“Your chamber?” Tony said, noting the lavish canopied bed in the back and the writing desk beside it. Against the other wall were shelves upon shelves of books and scrolls. “Why am I in your bedroom?”

Loki rolled his eyes. “It is my chamber, not a ‘bedroom’. It is my space in the castle, Anthony. Now, do not leave or I cannot guarantee your safety...” he said, turning away again.

“No you don’t, you aren’t taking off, and I want to know what is going on, dammit!” Tony said, his eyes flashing in anger.

Loki returned the glare he was getting. “I do not have time to deal with this right now, Anthony, I have to complete...”

“Son,” came a gentle voice from the doorway of the room. “You are distressing your companion so much I could feel it from my chamber.”

Tony looked to see a woman with a very kind face and ring-letted hair pinned up behind her head. She wore plain yet resplendent robes of blue and gold. Loki turned to face her.

“Mother, I am attempting to complete the tasks which we discussed, Anthony continues to be obtuse,” he said, green eyes narrowing at Tony.

“Obtuse?” Tony said, standing up, but wobbling, so he sat back down. “You just completely

humiliated me in front of everyone I know, did something, still not sure what that made them all look about to vomit and I'm afraid I know what it was, and disappear me up some fucking roller coaster to end up here and I still don't know why!"

Frigga turned to Loki. "Did you not explain anything, my son?" she asked, giving him a strained smile.

"I explained, it is not my fault if he or his so called battle companions could not comprehend it!" he said with an exasperated sigh.

"Go, I shall stay with your companion, my son. I believe I may be better able to explain the reality of the situation you both are in than you currently are," she said, walking through the room and sitting beside Tony who blinked at her and looked back at Loki.

"Very well, mother. I'll return when the task is done and bring Thor with me," he said with a nod of his head and was gone again.

Frigga turned to Tony with a smile and put a hand on his back. "Anthony, yes?" she asked. Tony nodded, completely out of his element. "I am Frigga, Thor and Loki's mother, wife to Odin. I see that you are very confused, my child, and I am sorry for that."

Tony nodded. "I didn't think today was going this way when I got up," he muttered, looking down at his arms where no marks marred the flesh. He could still in his mind the red, carved words that had been there when he was done.

"Loki has been speaking on you with me for a while now, trying to understand what has happened. I believe that between his interactions and my own research I understand now. Your presence has confirmed it," she said softly. Tony nodded. He honestly had no sarcasm left. He was drained of everything and there were too many things running rampant around his head for him to even formulate a response to her.

"Loki summoned me several months ago and showed me a story in a book of two souls connected by what one of your earth cultures refers to as a red string or thread of fate. We believe all souls come from the same source, so it is possible for souls from different realms to be connected in this fashion. Most the time, these two souls never meet. However, in happy circumstance they are brought together. They may be linked for many reasons, but I believe you Midgardians call them soul mates. When souls are separated by realms, the thread that binds them is stretched thin and though the connection does not break, it becomes very tenuous. The Aesir, or the Jotun as Loki is, are some of the longest lived, some may say immortal. For us to find our other half is unlikely. Zeus and his people referred to the idea as being born and split in twain. I suppose it could be seen that way," she said, reaching to the table and opening a book that showed two indistinct humanoid looking figures with red threads binding their forms together. Tony took it, unable to read it, of course, but the diagram was apparent as to what it was. The images were souls linked together.

"My soul is linked to Loki's? How is that even possible?" he asked softly.

She smiled. "It is a mystery, Anthony," she said softly. "What occurred when Loki appeared before you was that your distress called him. Bound in the cell as he was, his very soul responded with magic of its own and transported him to Midgard. He had no access to his Aesir or Jotun magic, but nothing can bind the soul. Your distress echoed through the thread and pulled him toward you."

Tony frowned, shaking his head. "That doesn't make any sense, if we're supposed to be soul bound or whatever it is, how come he didn't get yanked to Midgard when this happened? I was in a

hell of a lot more distress when they cut my chest open in the middle of a sand cave..." he said, thumping the arc reactor lightly, still thumbing through the book in his lap.

Frigga patted his leg and smiled. "You are so much like Loki, so smart."

"Yeah, genius, billionaire, playboy, philanthropist, whatever," he said, looking through the pages slowly and absorbing every detail.

"What occurred was that you, Loki and the Tesseract were in close enough proximity that the thread which had been pulled tight and thin over Loki's long life being separated from the soul was solidified. In the moment when that power touched Loki, and touched you, the thread was re-forged, in a fashion. The Tesseract is a powerful object. Just merely being in the same realm with it is enough to do such a minor thing," Frigga said, watching as Tony's eyes scanned the pages, and she knew that even though he didn't know the language written there, given enough time, he would understand every detail of it. Loki had been right. The Midgardian had an intellect to rival Loki's own.

Tony shut the book and looked up at her. "Okay so let me get this straight. Loki, god, Jotun, Asgardian, whatever, has lived like hundreds of years without finding the soul connected to his. Because it took so long, the link was dim and he didn't even know it was there. Then the Tesseract, after messing with his head, did some funky voodoo on both of us and that link that was almost gone was made strong. After he came back, when I got moody, he came to cheer me up?" he said, cocking one brow at her.

Frigga smiled, chuckling under her breath. "Well, I suppose, all save the situation was more dire than you being simply 'moody', dear Anthony. Loki felt the pull when you were on the verge of choosing a dark path."

Tony leaned back into the cushions. "So...what took him so long to haul my ass to Asgard? He's been popping in and out like more than six months. He doesn't seem too patient."

She nodded. "No, Loki is not. However, what had occurred he did not understand at first. Then, when he realized what was happening, he had to protect you, for his own sake."

Tony frowned and looked at her. "Huh?"

"When the thread is cut prematurely, it impacts the other. So once the link was solid again, if you had died too soon, it would have impacted Loki, possibly injuring him or depleted his own power even," she explained. Tony frowned and nodded. "At first, it was selfishness, I know. Loki told me as much when I came to him. But then, something changed. I know not all the details, those reside in Loki's mind alone. His visits would invariably end with him angry and frustrated at the things he saw and the things he felt. He didn't want to bring you to Asgard because it was not your home, and he felt it would be unfair to you. But this time, he could not stop himself from acting."

"So that's why he came back after he saved me from dying," he said nodding. "He couldn't bring me here unless you or Odin or whoever let him out of that cell."

She nodded. "Yes, so in order to do so, Loki made an agreement with the All Father. He agreed to resume his role as a Prince of Asgard and take you as his companion. A Prince of Asgard may claim a companion of any realm, and given the approval of Odin and myself and the companion's parents, it is a binding contract. The presence of a soul bond, however, makes it nearly impossible to deny his request. So it was done and Loki brought you here."

"When can I go home?" Tony asked, looking up at her.

Frigga's face changed and she started to speak but Loki and Thor appeared in the room just then. Thor was looking worse for the wear, though had tolerated the ride hitching better than Tony had.

"Brother, I...oh, Mother!" Thor said, realizing that she sat on the divan by Tony. "I am pleased to see you were helping the man of iron to understand the situation."

Loki stepped forward and grabbed Tony's right hand and placed a dense, black sphere into it with a curt nod. Tony frowned at it, feeling a familiar sensation from it. Loki pressed a finger to Tony's forehead and a green glow ensued.

"Sir?" came a familiar voice as soon as Loki stepped back.

Tony's eyes went wide in shock. "JARVIS?"

"Yes, Sir, it would seem that I have been transported in some fashion. I...am unsure what has occurred," the voice said.

Tony looked up at Loki who was wearing a smirk. "What...what is this?"

He shrugged. "JARVIS. I knew that you would be incredibly distraught if JARVIS were left behind. I have also locked down your personal areas in Stark Tower, and removed all suits that you created. I told your fellows that I destroyed them; however I in reality transported them to Asgard. I have also brought you workshop in its entirety across the realms, and has been installed in a pocket realm I created for you that will mimic earth conditions and will allow the things you work on to function as they would in Midgard, I am afraid that they will not quite function the same in Asgard. I will show you how to travel to and from it."

Tony stared at the sphere and looked back to Frigga. "I'm not going back, am I?" he said quietly to her.

She put an arm around his back and sighed. "I am sorry, my child, but it cannot be. Your presence here will be required. Loki has assumed his role and you, as his companion also have a role to fill. Odin was hesitant even with these stipulations. However, the prospect of having both his sons by his side, and Loki having taken a companion...it appeased his reservations."

Tony thought for a long moment, rolling the sphere in his hand back and forth. He swallowed thickly and looked up to Loki who was looking rather smug and that really did not sit well.

"You are not on my favorite people list," he said.

Loki looked at him. "I do not understand. I have rescued you completely and left those that mistreated you licking their own wounds with much to think on."

Tony shook his head. "You practically kidnapped me to Asgard! And you didn't explain a damn thing to me and basically gave me no say so in the matter! What if I didn't want to leave?"

"I don't believe your wants were considered, Anthony," Loki said coolly. Tony's brows furrowed and he started to speak again. "No, no, Anthony. You would have ended your life; you cannot be trusted to choose anything currently. Perhaps after some time has passed, I will allow you some choices of your own, but those choices are no longer yours to make. You have been taken as my companion, I will decide these things."

All Tony could manage was a strangled, "What?"

Loki walked away toward the door and snapped his fingers and spoke to someone. A moment later

he led two young women in. One was carrying an armload of clothing of some sort, and the other was carrying several glass bottles. “Junia and Kest will see to your bathing and dressing, I have other duties, as do Thor and my mother. There is a presentation ceremony in a few hours time that well will attend. The All-Father will announce your position and it will assure that you are not harmed by anyone while you are in Asgard. Thor and I have certain guests to invite, and we must away now or it will not be accomplished in time.”

Loki turned and left with Thor close behind him. Frigga turned to him and smiled again. “We shall speak more later, Anthony. For now, please, let the girls help you dress for this. Once it is over, we will spend much time together, I believe,” she said gently, standing and leaving.

Tony looked up at the two willowy blondes in white robes and he had nothing to say. He really had nothing, so when the one with the red headband reached for his hand, he let her lead him through a door into a lavish looking bath. His nerves were more than apparent to both the girls.

“Please, we are not here to do anything save get you ready, it is our duty and pleasure to see to the needs of the companions, wives, and concubines of the Princes of Asgard,” the one with the slightly darker hair said and Tony glared at her.

“Concubines? Um, I’m not that...” he said as they, with surprising strength, manhandled him out of his clothes. They may have been petite looking women, but they were both Asgardian women. That meant both were a whole lot tougher than they appeared. And a lot stronger.

“Of course not,” the lighter haired one said with a smile, grabbing his hand and stepping into the bath with her robes still on. “You are much more important than that! You shall be of the same station as Lady Frigga!”

Tony thought about that statement then the reality of it crashed into him with the force of the arc repulsor. “What...” he muttered. Lady Frigga. Wife to Odin...

“Of course, you’ll be named a Lord Odinson, after all, the girl said, pouring something that smelled strange over his head. He thought about that. Lord Odinson. *I’m going to take what’s mine.* The way Loki had talked, he belonged to him. Wait. He looked at the girls.

“What exactly does the word companion mean anyway?” he asked quietly.

The two girls exchanged glances. “You do not know?” the first asked.

“I’m from earth,” he said softly. His body was limp as they washed him and moved his limbs. Any other day, he might have been incredibly interested in two hot Asgardian girls with him while he was naked in a bath the size of a pool. Not today, though. His hair was being washed at the moment with whatever strange smelling thing she’d put on it.

“The Royalty of Asgard is permitted to claim in courtship whoever they wish, generally, when they are bonded, they are female, a bride, but when it is the same, they are referred to as the companion, and the husband or groom is the Prince or King. Tis a matter of titles only, and it is every Asgardian’s dream to be on the receiving end of a courtship and claim by one of the Princes,” the one with the darker hair said, pouring scented water over Tony’s head.

“Courtship...claim. I...see...” he said, everything clicking together in his head. Honestly, if he hadn’t been in such a poor mental state to start with, he would have put it all together a whole lot sooner. Once again, Tony was stuck. One of the girls lifted his head and smiled.

“You seem sad, whatever for, my Lord?” she said.

"I didn't get a choice in this," he said. "I never seem to get a choice in things that are really important," he said, sighing.

She smiled. "But you are an Odinson now! All Asgard will be yours, and Prince Loki adores you, we can tell."

Tony frowned as they helped him dry off and began to dress him in the robes he was to wear. They were obviously heavily influenced by Loki's preferences, as they were layers of rich velvet and satin in greens, blacks and gold. One of the girls placed a small ring like thing around his head. He rolled his eyes up to see it but he didn't get a good look before hand.

"How would you know that?" he said, shifting in the heavy things. He hoped they gave him something more comfortable to wear around the place.

The lighter haired one grinned. "Because he's letting you wear this, of course," she said, adjusting the robes. They were too long, however. She looked down. "Oh, my, you are a bit on the shorter side..." she said, frowning. "I'll have to fix this," she said.

"What's so special about this?" he said, shifting as she kneeled and began to shorten it.

"The only other person Loki ever loved, the mother of his daughter Hel, is the only other person to have worn this," she said reverently as she moved around it. "This has been kept in pristine condition since the day their union was announced. No other has ever even touched this."

"Loki had a wife?" he asked.

The girls nodded, standing back. "Long ago," the other said, smiling. "He has been lonely and perhaps that is what led to the troubles. He truly has become smitten this time," she said winking at Tony.

Tony wasn't sure what to think, though as he was led away, dressed now in the finery and going through numerous halls. He was too absorbed in trying to map the place in his head to pay much attention to what was happening and when he heard familiar voices nearby he froze and both his attendants stopped and turned to him.

"Are you ill, my Lord?" the lighter haired asked.

Tony shook his head, listening again and hearing nothing. That was Steve's voice. What was he doing here? Unless he was imagining things. He let the two girls pull him away but he had trouble stilling the staccato of his heart.

-oooooooo-OOOOOO-oooooooo-

Thor followed his brother quickly. "Brother, stop, can you talk to me about this?" he pleaded.

Loki stopped and turned to him. "Thor, I have much yet to do. I have to make arrangements for our special guests."

"Brother, please, explain this. I understand what you've done, but not the whole of the why? You would return as a full Prince of Asgard without further bids for power or pursuits? Without the freedom to leave and do as you please? What did you ask of our Father?" Thor asked.

Thor knew better than anyone, for Loki to give up almost everything, the All Father had granted him more than simply allowing him to take a Midgardian as his companion. Loki had given all to stand by Odin's side once more.

"It is complicated, Thor, too complicated for your simple brain. Know that I have what I want, our Father has what he wants, and that is all that should concern you," he said, turning to leave.

Thor grabbed him, though. "What of what Tony wants? You have not bothered to ask it of him."

"That is beside the point. He...there is no consideration of his wants. He will learn to accept what has befallen, and the blame does not rest with me. I acted because I had to act. Had your so called friends not forced my hand..." Loki dared his brother to argue the point. "You I suppose escapes much of my blame, as you did not live there daily, and I do not doubt that Tony kept up his façade around you. The others have no possible excuse! They laughed, Thor, when I was unable to save him from the collapsing building that injured his hands. They laughed that I had failed him. They did not laugh when I reversed the damage. What do you think I want to do to them? They watched as he practically destroyed himself. And they didn't care."

Thor nodded. "Brother, you are not seeing clearly, you are blinded by your rage; it will be detrimental to your desires to see Tony safe if you are not careful. He is not Asgardian. He does not live by our laws; he was not raised to listen to the word of a king."

Loki shrugged him off. "I am doing what I must, and if you would look close enough you will see I do what is best for him! Now will you help me with the guests or not? We haven't much time before the ceremony."

Thor nodded. "I will aid you, brother, as I promised," he said, letting out an exasperated sigh and they disappeared in a cloud of mist.

Thor blinked to find himself in the lower level of the Tower, staggered as always by Loki's method of travel. The place was abuzz with activity and everyone fell back away from the two figures that just suddenly appeared in the middle of the crowd. Loki was looking around and then parted the people and strode toward a desk. Behind it sat a receptionist staring at him in shock. Thor came up beside him sheepishly.

"I request to see Pepper Potts. Now," Loki said.

"Who...who may I ask..." she stuttered, picking up the phone.

"What are you doing back?" came a female voice behind them, and both the Asgardians turned to see Clint and Natasha standing behind them.

Loki looked at them and smiled. "I come bearing invitations to an event this evening," he said to her. He smiled, stepping forward and flinging something at both of them too quickly for either of them to react, which was saying that it was impossible for any mortal to dodge. A small star shaped pattern appeared on each of their foreheads with a pop, and a gout of mist made them both disappear. Loki smiled to himself. "I hope it works correctly, else their bodies will be torn apart and spread between here and Asgard," he muttered under his breath. "Not that I'd mind."

"Loki?" Pepper's voice said from behind him. He turned to see the person he'd come for. "What did you do?"

"I invited them. Well, less invite and more forced, but it is a happy event, my dear lady. Please know that of all, I blame you the least for what has occurred," he said with a deep bow at her.

People were beginning to gather and more than one camera phone was busily taking images. Pepper shook her head. "I don't understand, what do you mean? We're a little busy, I can't find Tony and we can't access the upper floors, and I'm worried..."

“No need to fret over Anthony, he is safe, and it was I that locked out the upper levels of Stark Tower, removed your AI friend, destroyed the labs that contained Tony’s suits,” he admitted, nodding to her.

She blinked just as a man in a uniform came up behind her. “Pepper, what’s going on?” he said.

“Rhodey, Loki says Tony’s safe. And he did this,” she said, taking a step away and looking at Thor curiously.

“Brother you are making the situation worse, and the Midgardians are gathering in mass, I do not wish...” Thor began.

“Quiet,” he said. “Ms. Pepper Potts, please, I shall return in fifteen minutes to take you to Asgard to be in attendance of a ceremony for Anthony. If there is anyone else who should like to see Anthony, I suggest they come. He will not be returning to Midgard again.”

Pepper frowned. “What?”

“Fifteen minutes, my lady. I must retrieve the other guests...” he said, grabbing Thor and disappearing again, leaving two very confused individuals.

This time, they appeared on the Helicarrier once again, and Loki grinned as all the SHIELD agents moved. He waved a hand, sending most of them to their knees, and flinging one of the spheres where Fury stood. He, like Natasha and Clint, disappeared, sending everyone in a frenzy of activity. He strode off, finding himself facing Steve in the corridor. He didn’t let him speak, simply tossed the object at him and went past the remaining mist.

“Brother, you do not seem to need assistance...” Thor said.

“You are here in case I have a hulk to deal with,” Loki answered opening the door to a lab and flinging the object again at Bruce. “Now, you go back and explain to them exactly what is happening. I will retrieve Anthony’s other friends.” With that he left Thor and disappeared. Thor shook his head, heading to the flight deck and taking the Bifrost back to Asgard.

Loki once more appeared in the lobby of the tower, shocking everyone once more. This time, cameras came out faster when he appeared. He strode forward where Pepper, the man in the uniform and another man with dark hair stood.

He bowed slightly to them. “Is this who will be attending?”

“I don’t know what your game is Loki, but this is out of hand,” the man in the uniform said. Loki realized it was “Rhodey” as Tony called him.

“Ah yes, Rhodey, and Happy,” he said, looking at the chunky dark haired man gripping Pepper’s hand. “You of course get an easier trip than the others.”

Loki smiled and a circle formed around the four of them and just like the others, they were gone in a mist of greenish smoke.

They appeared again, all three Midgardians stumbling to their knees, in the antechamber that he had sent the others. The rest of the Avengers stood as he appeared, obviously having been appeased in some fashion by Thor. He nodded to Thor.

“I leave it to you, brother, I must prepare now,” he said and disappeared once again.

"Thor, what the hell is going on?" Fury said from beside him. Thor had hoped Loki would offer some explanation instead of dumping this in his lap completely.

"I told you before of Loki's claiming of Tony," he said quietly.

"What?" Pepper said, stepping forward. "What are you talking about, Thor?"

Thor looked at her and the other two new arrivals that had not been privy to Loki's first visits of the day. "Loki and Tony are soul bound. They are fated to be together, it is as it is written and such things are not to be undone. Loki has taken his station as Prince and his right to claim any being in the realms as a prince. Normally, non Asgardians are not allowed here, at least not for very long. The exception is when a Prince claims one as his bride or companion. Should I desire, I too could allow Jane this same thing. Loki brought you all to see Tony because this is the ceremony. The bond has already been created, but this is Odin's acceptance and giving of Tony the title of a Lord Odinson."

Pepper stared. "Lord Odinson. Like a brother?" she asked.

Thor looked at her. "As a companion. If he were female, he would be Loki's bride; males are referred to as companions in our laws."

Rhodey stared at him for a long moment. "Loki is marrying Tony."

Thor shook his head. "In Midgardian terms, I suppose we will leave it at that. There are many complexities, but it is not my area of expertise."

There was a knock at the door and Thor answered it to see a guard. He stepped out for a moment before coming back in. "The ceremony will start soon, we must go and assume our positions. Loki felt that despite what has happened, Tony would appreciate seeing you all once again under less... strained circumstances. Since you will take the place of his family, Loki has decided to bequeath the gifting on you that is normally reserved for those in that position."

With that, he led the group out the door and down the myriad halls to great hall where he placed them all to the right side of the great throne pedestal. "You have the position of honor reserved for the family," Thor said quietly as others from the court trickled into the area. "I must stand beside Father and my brother. Things will begin shortly and there will be a feast afterward where you may speak with Tony before you leave. I doubt that Loki will leave his side, however, if you wish, you may all go to a private chamber to say farewells to him."

Thor nodded to them, leaving them still very confused and headed to the opposite door where Loki was standing. He looked at Thor. "Is everything set?" he asked.

Thor nodded. "As you requested, brother," he said with a small smile. "Are you certain your gifts will not upset Tony further?"

Loki gave him a smirk and Thor knew they were in for trouble. Granted, at this point, he could not deny his brother his desires. Loki, though he had not claimed him, had rights to Tony as his soul bonded. His friends had done disservice to Tony, and it was Loki's place to do as he wished for the damages caused. He shook his head and headed toward the front where his mother and father had come and seated themselves to await the ceremony. "Mother, Father," Thor said with a nod to each.

Odin looked at him. "You seem distressed, my son," he said.

"I fear that this is wrong for my friend Tony. He has been through much in his life and I fear that

this may be more than he can carry right now, being brought into this without knowledge or consent to it," Thor said, looking at the gathered Avengers.

"My son, such things are not necessary in this situation. Fate has decreed that this is what will occur, the souls are linked, and a soul linked to a Prince of Asgard cannot remain in a place like Midgard. It would endanger our position, were it known, he could be used against us by our enemies," Odin said mildly. Of course, arranged marriages and bondings were not unheard of in Asgard. More than one person had been bonded to another they despised, but that was the way things worked.

Thor nodded as he thought about his Father's words. Wise words, as always. It was true, if the bond were discovered and Tony captured by one of Odin's enemies, the results would be terrible, much worse than they were currently. He just wished that Loki had taken the time to explain of this to Tony before he whisked him off so suddenly. He had almost taken his own life less than twelve hours before, and now he would stand before the court of Asgard. Thor wasn't sure how this would end, but he hoped it would end well.

Odin stood and the entire court went quiet. "I have the pleasure to make a joyous announcement to all of Asgard. My son, Loki, has returned to my side as Loki Odinson. He has done so in earnest, and taken up the duties that he has previously not seen to. In doing so, he has taken a companion to be made a new Lord Odinson this day." There was a round of loud cheering. Odin nodded to Loki who came out slowly, leading the Asgardian garbed Tony with him. Tony was staring at all the people that had managed to fit into the place.

"Relax, Anthony," Loki said under his breath. "No one will speak to you in here, and you do not have to speak to my Father yet," he said, making the long walk toward the front.

Tony nodded. The girls had led him to a small chamber and Loki had shown up shortly after that, but Loki obviously wasn't in the mood to talk, and was too busy fussing with his own formal robes. Stepping out had been hard, and now he wanted to escape the attention as he was led up beside Loki and Odin. He looked to see Frigga smiling at him. He could do this, he thought. He could do this.

Loki looked around. "I welcome all to this occasion. I would present my companion, Anthony Stark of Midgard, now renamed, Anthony Odinson of Asgard," Loki said with a smile.

Tony was suddenly very glad he was holding onto his arm because he locked eyes with Pepper at that point. Pepper was here, so were the others. Pepper had a look on her face that Tony wasn't sure he recognized. Her hand was clutching Happy tightly on her right and Rhodey stood beside her on the left, wearing a similar expression to Pepper's. Happy just looked overwhelmed. Fury and the Avengers were all staring at him with looks akin to wonder. Granted, Tony looked quite different in the strange, heavy robes. Then it dawned on him. To an Asgardian this wouldn't be heavy. The only thing that marked him still as the same man was the glow that forced its way through the fabric in spots from his arc reactor.

"It is rare to find a soul bound to our kind, or your kind," Loki continued. "Despite my troubles, and the pains I brought to my father and Asgard, they bore the fruit you see here. I have given my father my solemn oath to remain here. In exchange, Anthony has been accepted as an Aesir in all but body. That, too may see change in the future," he said, smiling at Tony's confused reaction. "I do ask that you understand that he has not been here before now, and knows little of our ways." He stepped backward, pulling Tony with him as Odin resumed the forward position.

"Now, we have the gifting ceremony for the family of Anthony," Odin said with a nod to Loki.

Loki smiled and left Tony. To his relief, though, Frigga came over and linked arms with him a moment later. The whole thing was overwhelming to a high degree. Loki stepped down to where the friends he had were waiting. He had no idea what Loki was doing now. Considering the fury which he approached them before, he was worried at the subtle smile he carried now.

“Ms. Pepper Potts,” Loki said, nodding to her. “Anthony’s heart is full with love and admiration of you, and despite your inattention to details, you are first among his friends.” He held up his hand and a black sphere similar to the one that he had put JARVIS in appeared. He placed it in her hands. “This shall allow you to communicate freely with Anthony if you are both holding the spheres. It is infused with the essence of your JARVIS as well, and you may inquire into each other through him as well.”

He turned to Rhodey. “You also are dear to Anthony. I will not forgive your transgressions, however, though he may not see them as such. Ignorance of pain and suffering is allowable, however, so I grant you the same gift as Ms. Potts,” he said, another black sphere appeared and he handed it to him.

He looked to Happy standing beside Pepper. “You too have been faithful. And of all the people in Midgard that could be with Pepper, he is glad that it is you.” He handed him another of the spheres before turning to the Avengers and Fury.

He stepped to Fury first. “The creator of the Avengers, who would give Anthony a purpose and direction. Yet, you would never fully accept him. To you, my gift,” he said, holding up his hand and allowing a ball of blue to coalesce and handing it to him. “Understanding and empathy will be yours even when it is a curse upon you.”

He looked to the others. “I brought the rest of you here because I knew that saying good bye would make this real, and this is good bye. Anthony Stark is no more, and shall not return to Midgard. You are each granted my gifts, but they shall not be understood until the time is right.”

He in turn handed each of them a sphere of a different color; blue for Steve, purple for Bruce, red for Natasha and black for Clint. He turned on his heel and strode back to the side of his companion. Tony wanted to know what he’d done but he didn’t want to speak in front of all of Asgard. He looked back. “We shall see you all in the hall,” Loki said and pulled Tony after him as he left the way they’d come through the side door instead of the main entrance.

“What did you give them?” he asked as they entered the chamber he’d waited in. “I want to know. I don’t want them hurt.”

Loki smiled, but Tony knew immediately the mischief behind that small. “I have but gifted them a god’s boon. What that looks like shall be determined by their own hearts.”

Tony wasn’t sure what to say, but he knew that wishes granted never were fulfilled the way they were intended. Especially with the god of lies and mischief involved. Loki smiled. “No harm shall befall them, but they will learn hard lessons, and will realize that they had indeed taken many things for granted. Now, the banquet and your farewells.”

Without another word he led Tony to the tables in the banquet hall, seating him between himself and Frigga. For this, Tony was quiet grateful. She took his hand under the table and smiled at him as Odin began the feast. To be honest he was too overwhelmed to think much about what was happening around him. He ate far less than those around him, of course, not only because he wasn’t Aesir but because he was sick over everything that had occurred so fast. He felt every eye on him and it was disconcerting when it used to be something he craved. The change was startling but he wasn’t sure what to do with it. He wanted to hide instead of show off. He was completely

out of his element in a place that left him without comfort. He didn't know how these people would react to the things he said, and to be honest, any one of them could kill him, even the wash twins as he'd dubbed them in his head.

After the banquet completed, the servants cleared some of the tables and an impromptu band began singing together and people danced and laughed. It was surreal. All these people celebrating his arrival. He supposed that Loki wasn't a typical prince so he wouldn't have a typical partner. But still. Loki had barely spoken to him the entire time, instead intercepting well-wishers and people who were fascinated by Tony. He wondered the purpose, however. He wanted very much to believe that Loki understood he was not taking all these things easily. The god had rummaged through his brain, he should know that his quiet times were the times he was the most out of sorts.

Finally, the merriment seemed to be winding down, and Loki took his hand under the table and leaned over. "It is traditional for us to dance for them before anyone will leave the hall," he said quietly, pulling Tony to his feet.

Tony nodded. "I guess, I mean, I don't know Asgardian ways..." he said as he was spun suddenly out in front of everyone to clapping around them. Tony didn't really have time to consider what his feet were doing because Loki definitely was in control of what he was doing here. He was still surprised by how strong such a wiry looking man could be. The music was moderate, and he found himself quickly picking up the steps that Loki's nimble feet were accomplishing with ease.

"You learn quickly, Anthony," Loki said with a smirk.

"Yeah, genius, remember?" he said cheekily, starting to enjoy the motion and feeling a bit heady from the wine he'd been given.

Loki gave him a lopsided grin and brought him in closer as the music changed to a slower feeling one and the space they were given by the others receded, others joining the floor. Tony was somewhat glad as he was pressed even closer to the taller man. That same something, that strangeness he'd felt since the first time he'd seen him still washed over him with the proximity, and despite his insistence that he was angry over the whole thing, his heartbeat still raced.

Loki leaned over and whispered in his ear. "Your pulse is accelerated, Anthony," he said, breathing out as he spoke, sending a shiver up Tony's spine.

Tony cleared his throat, looking away from him. "I've been dancing, remember?"

Loki smirked, moving his hand from Tony's waist to settle onto his hip more, fingertips dancing along the swell there. "Yes, quite splendidly, I might add, especially for a Midgardian..."

Tony wasn't sure if it was the wine, the whole day or what but he was growing more tired than he liked. Loki's brow wrinkled as he noted Tony's lids growing heavier. "I'll have Thor escort your friends to the private chamber and you can bid them farewell," Loki said as the song ended and he led Tony away from the others, nodding to Thor as he went.

Tony was led into a large seating room and Loki sat down on a large divan beside him to wait for the others to come with Thor. Thor opened the door moments later and Tony jumped up and was immediately wrapped in Pepper's arms. He pushed her back to see she was crying.

"Pep, don't do that!" he pleaded. "I...I'm fine with this, okay?" he assured her. Of course, the assurance was false, but Pepper was too distressed to notice.

"Tony, I'm sorry if I did anything to hurt you," she said, looking at him sadly. He shook his head.

"Pep, you are the best thing I ever had in my life. There's nothing that will ever change that," he said, kissing her cheek. He looked to see Happy standing nervously beside her. "And Happy, Loki is right. If ever there was someone I would want to see with Pep, it would be you. Take care of her, okay?" he said, leaving Pepper and hugging Happy fondly. Happy nodded. "You got it, boss."

He looked at Rhodey. "Guess you get to play with my suit," he said with a smirk. Who knows, maybe I'll come up with some weird hybrid suit while I'm up here," he said, grinning.

He turned to the Avengers. "I'll miss you guys," he said. "I wanted you to be happy, more than anything, I just...I'm me. I can't be everything."

Steve nodded. "Tony, I just wanted to say, I...I don't know what I want to say I haven't figured it out. I'm sorry that we weren't including you in the choices we were making. That wasn't fair of us, I know that now."

Tony shrugged. "I'm sorry too, I think we could have been friends, you know, if Howard hadn't gotten between us. He had a way of ruining my relationships," he said with smirk. "Guess that didn't change even after he died."

Clint reached out his hand next. "Man, I just...I hope it goes good for you."

Tony smiled and shook his head. "Yeah, for you too, bird boy."

"Tony, I think things got a lot sideways between us," Bruce said. "And...I should have seen things and I didn't. I guess something can be said for self-pity being detrimental. There's a reason I lived along for so long, and this must be one of them."

"No problem, you're my science bro, so that's all good. Just...keep doing it," he said with a nod.

Natasha reached her hand out next and Tony shook it. "I could have done better, I know," she said.

"Well, that's life, right, spider?" he said with a smirk. "Try to work on the red in the ledger. I guess I won't get to clear mine like I thought," he said, turning in time to be hugged by Pepper again.

"Tony, please, are you sure about this? Are you going to be okay?" she asked, tearful again.

"Pep, I'm fine. You're already Stark Industries CEO, so you should have no problems. Up to you what you tell the board and the public. Doesn't matter to me now, so tell them what they need to hear," Tony said, brushing her hair from her face. "Marry Happy, have a couple kids, and name one Tony for me."

She smiled him and Thor stepped forward. "Come with me, I'll take you through the Bifrost this way. It is less jarring than Loki's method."

Tony watched them all leave and felt a heavy heart at the thought he wouldn't see them again. He slumped back into the seat and stared into space, exhausted from wearing the bloody heavy robes, and he thought the hulk buster suit had been heavy. This stuff was suffocating.

"Are you well?" Loki said, returning with a glass filled with a bright green colored drink.

"Hot, tired," he said, taking the clear glass from him and downing the drink all at once, and nearly choking over the strange taste. It tasted like crushed up candy and fire all rolled into one. He looked up at Loki who was sipping at a wine goblet. "What the hell was that?" he asked, blinking rapidly.

"You Midgardians have a similar drink, absinthe you call it. Mixture of special herbs in an alcohol drink. Quite relaxing, you may need such after the day you've had," Loki said, crossing his legs and sipping his wine.

Tony had never felt anything like it. He felt like he was drunk, but his mouth was tingling, like wherever the drink had touched was numbed and alive with feeling at the same time. He shook his head. "I feel weird," he said, moving to stand and unable to get to his feet. He felt Loki's hands on him and the swirling sensation overtook him and he was back in Loki's chamber.

Loki smiled, untying the back of the heavy robes he was wearing and letting them fall. Tony's head was buzzing and he could care less at the moment that he was in the middle of Loki's room naked as he was born. He felt the world tilt and life and finally it stilled and he was staring at dancing stars on a green curtain. Wait, that was the canopy of Loki's bed...



Absinthe Dreams

Chapter Notes

Edits may be coming, not quite happy with this one just yet...

The sudden realization of where he was and what position he was in and Tony's reaction to it coincided exactly. He was not doing this again. He looked over to the side of the bed to see Loki removing his clothes and that was enough. His head was so cloudy that he didn't even stop to think, he just knew he was getting the hell away from him right this minute. He flipped himself and scrambled across the broad expanse to get off and away. He didn't care where, honestly, his head was so muddled he couldn't even see well where he was going. He felt Loki's hands on him and yelled and started to fight him off. He wasn't having this. Not today, he'd get away and never come back... He had kind of trusted him to treat him differently after the things he'd said today. Well, he never had trusted him to be honest. He really just got dragged here and there without much say in the matter, and this was the last straw.

Loki knew it was a gamble, but he had a point to prove to his fragile companion. He expected him to have a reaction, however the fervor and violence of the reaction surprised him more than he expected. He was no Asgardian, but still. Loki reacted, dropping the nightclothes that he had been retrieving and teleporting around to the other side to catch him as he almost took a head dive off the bed into the stone floor. Loki winced, realizing that perhaps he'd had a little more drink than then he'd thought, otherwise he wouldn't have given him the sleeping draught. He hadn't lied, it was almost identical to what the Midgardians called Absinthe, just Asgardians weren't affected quite the same way, and he'd never seen a Midgardian react this way either. Of course, he knew what was going through Tony's mind, and if he intended to stop it, he had to make this work.

Loki winced as he had to pull Tony back as he struggled weakly against him. It was no more to Loki than lifting a struggling child. He was still amazed at how light the Midgardians were compared to the more dense and heavy Asgardians. To be honest, it was no effort at all even when he struggled against him with full strength. He winced as he felt teeth bite into his arm. It, of course, didn't break his skin but it smarted a bit. It was like trying to wrestle a small, wild animal he thought to himself with a wry grin. Leave it to someone like Loki to end up with a companion nearly as fierce as the animals he shape shifted into.

"Anthony, stop this," he said in a tired tone. He himself had managed to get out of his robes but still wore his pants. He guessed he'd spell them off once he got Tony settled. He managed to get him toward the middle of the bed again and resisted the urge to slap him. He instead closed his eyes and took a breath. He wasn't going to treat him like that. While he would doubtless be subjected to such things should he continue his behavior, he was not in control of himself at this time. After all, he was companion to a prince, there were rules by which he had to abide.

"Anthony!" he said, finally pinning the frightened Midgardian on his back.

Tony gasped at him and the fright in his eyes was clear to Loki. Even as stoic as the god of mischief appeared on the surface, Loki felt it pull at his heart though he was desperately trying to assert control over his smaller companion. Control at this point was necessary. He couldn't have

him hurting himself again. One who has tried to take his life before may do it yet again. He wouldn't, couldn't, take that sort of chance, even if it meant being more forceful than he would like at this juncture. Tony was too argumentative and strong willed. If he allowed him to continue, he would. "Stop this, Anthony. Look at me."

Despite Loki's strength and speed, he didn't dare let go of him. He knew better than that. The last thing he wanted was him to hurt himself in this condition. Loki also had to be careful not to hurt him. He was reminded vividly of how fragile his body was compared to his own, just like how light it was. Loki adjusted his weight to where he had one leg arched over his waist, with his opposite knee beside his hip, and both hands holding his shoulders with barely any pressure, just enough to still him. The position was caging, but kept Loki's heavier weight off of him, and kept him from trying to escape him in his panic. Loki was confident in his ability to catch him again, but he worried more about the unpredictable nature of someone scared and alone in a strange place with a head clouded by drink and magic. While some night, a naked chase through the halls of Asgard might be fun, this was not the night for it. Loki wasn't ignorant of the fact that Tony was in a very precarious state, but he had to bring him out of it quickly.

Loki wasn't going to use his magic. He easily could either remove the toxins muddling his mind or simply put him to sleep again. No, he couldn't do that, for it would defeat the purpose of the whole night. He needed him in this condition, the same one that was familiar to him, vulnerable and trapped. He needed him to see. He needed him to know. Loki wasn't Stane. This was the only way to prove that beyond a doubt in the trickster god's mind. There may have been other ways, but Loki didn't have the luxury of time to work through them. He doubted that he would have had the patience, either. Loki knew that his own desires would at some point overwhelm him, whether he wanted to be careful or not.

Tony's body trembled under him but he stilled, and Loki nodded to him. "Anthony, I need you to look at me. You are safe here. I promised you that, and it is true. I am to protect you, not hurt you. I know I must prove this, that what I want is more than what anyone in your life has wanted. You have no gadgets to offer me, you have no mental exercises that you must impress me with, and you need not give yourself to me simply to satisfy me. The mortals, they took advantage of you in so many ways. I want none of these things, Anthony."

Tony's head was spinning and his heart was pounding but he had no choice but to listen to Loki's words. Could he trust him? He swallowed and looked away, he was too tired and fighting him had made him even more exhausted. He was again amazed at the strength such a slight seeming man had. His body went limp under his hands, and he accepted whatever happened here, no matter what it was. He was learning quickly that the Asgardians did things a lot differently than he was used to doing them, and being basically wed to a prince meant that he was subject to more laws than he cared to contemplate. He would tolerate this if it was what must be. To his surprise, though, Loki shifted, letting go and sliding down beside him, pulling a thick cover over them both. He felt bare skin against his own and guessed Loki had finished undressing magically. He closed his eyes and whimpered despite himself.

"Anthony," Loki said quietly. "I expect nothing," he said quietly, pulling the shorter man close to face him so he could feel the whole of his body against him. Despite the shudder that went through Tony's body, he felt warm, engulfed against Loki's surprising warmth as their bodies molded together like matching pieces of clay. Loki put his arms around him and laid his hands against his lower back but moved no further. Tony found himself burying his head into the hollow of his neck without realizing what he was doing, it felt nice, and he smelled of something he couldn't name. The wine, the green stuff, the whole day was crashing into him and he couldn't stay awake any longer.

Loki felt Tony's breathing even out and grow deeper and he knew he'd given in to the exhaustion that had wracked his body. He slowly ran one hand up his back and curled it over the back of his head. He hadn't felt this contented to simply be next to someone in a very long time. He'd fought so hard at the idea that this was a soul bind. At first he was annoyed and irritated that he could be bound to such a frustrating man-child. To think, he had to be bound to a Midgardian. It disgusted him at first. He thought he'd spend his days playing "guardian angel" as Tony put it, keeping him from dying and causing him problems. Loki was sure it wouldn't have been too bad for him should Tony have died, but he was rather fond of his magic, and didn't want to take the chances of losing it over such a thing as one annoying mortal. Then, the more he began to understand him, the more he began to want him. Of course, what Loki wanted, he generally got. This would be no exception. Even then, though, that desire of pure possession had begun to morph into something else and he had no explanation for it.

There was no other answer, however. His desire was only to see him rest, nothing more, and to see him understand, that Loki knew that he was not ready for anything more than this. If Loki had more time, if there was just more time, he would have taken it. However, he didn't have more time.

The magical binding he'd made would only be completed once they spent their first night together. It was an old law, one that prevented the bonding of those who married for the sake of subterfuge. It was a limited time in which it could be finished, and it would indeed be difficult to bring his new companion to the point where he was comfortable enough to take the final step to ensure they would remain together and in Asgard. Tony would be cast out if he was not made a full Odinson by the end of the first moon after their bonding. It was too short, Loki knew, but he would try to make sure that things happened on their own, though as tonight, he would accelerate the stages.

Sleeping nude in someone's arms might have seemed insignificant to some, but Loki knew that Tony needed the comfort of touch, but feared it at the same time because of what would be expected of him to receive that touch. Giving him a drink that would make his head weary and unsteady might seem to be a way to make him more pliant, but in truth it was a way to show him that Loki would refuse to take advantage of him no matter how weak and vulnerable he was. Loki knew no other way to solve these problems. Tony was strong headed and onerous. Loki understood this because he himself was much the same. He extended his magic around them, an invisible dome that would keep Tony from wandering off from him just yet. He knew that Odin had assured him no harm would come to him in Asgard. Loki did not trust that to be the truth, however. He had never had the gift of prophecy, but there was a deep foreboding in his veins that he could not explain.

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The dream was perhaps Steve's worst nightmare. It was more real than anything he'd ever felt and he woke sweaty and panting for breath. He didn't notice the sphere that Loki had given him glowing inside the drawer of the bedside table as he rushed into the shower. He'd been trapped as himself before the serum, before he became who he was now. It had been horrible and real and until he awoke he thought it was real.

In another room, Clint woke much the same state, gasping and flipping on all the lights and frantically looking at his eyes in the mirror. The dream was so real... He had been cursed by a magic wielding witch and his vision was permanently altered to horrid tunnel vision. He swallowed hard and checked again. It had felt so very real. He didn't notice the faint glow of the orb he'd been given either.

Natasha awoke screaming, one hand going between her legs and the other to her chest. She pulled open her shirt and panted. It had been so real. She checked her hair and got up and stared for a long

time in the mirror. She was a woman, she wasn't a man, she was a woman. The glowing orb went unnoticed there too.

Bruce awoke mid transformation his dream had been so real. Luckily he was able to come back down from it, stumbling into the bathroom of his hotel. He glanced at the orb he'd been given by the sink. It glowed faintly. He nodded. No doubt the horrible nightmare was Loki's doing. He picked it up and dropped it in the trash beside the toilet. He would check out now, he couldn't sleep again after that. He left quickly, not noticing the orb was in his bag glowing softly when he picked it up.

There began weeks that similar things would happen. None of them connected it to the orbs except Bruce, and he had gone into hiding once more. He didn't try to contact them as he sat in the hut he'd been given by the village he was in this time. He wondered what message Loki was trying to deliver and if it was nothing more than punishment for what he felt was wrongdoing against Tony. He did find himself often dwelling on the things that he could have used that Tony had provided him so freely. In a way he thought Tony believed that buying their loyalty was all he could do. He laid back in the cot and stared at the ceiling for a long time until a little girl came in to speak with him.

"Mr. Doctor?" she asked quietly.

Bruce looked up at her. She was a small girl, one of the people of the village. Her dark hair was tied up in a tail on her head and her soulful eyes seemed to carry emotion beyond her scope. "What is it, dear?" he asked in her language.

"Why are you so sad? At night, you cry," she said softly. She was perhaps nine years old, he thought. She'd had a sprained ankle a few days ago that he'd helped set for her.

Bruce smiled. "I have bad dreams sometimes," he said, glancing at his bag where the orb he couldn't seem to rid himself of resided.

"When I have bad dreams, I try to think of happy things, and then I dream about them," she said, smiling kindly.

Bruce nodded. "I do try, but it is hard. My dreams are different than yours, I think. They're about someone I once called a friend."

"You can't do that," she said.

Bruce frowned. "Can't do what?" he asked.

"No one is once a friend, they are always your friend, no matter what happens or how mad you get at them. They forgive you because to be a friend to someone, you see their heart and soul, they know you care for them even if they don't say it," she said, smiling.

Bruce sighed, rubbing a hand over his dark hair. "I did some things I shouldn't, didn't see things I should, and I was kind of a bad friend, though. I don't think he will be my friend any longer," he said, shrugging at her.

"So tell him sorry," she said with a shrug at him. "If you're friends, he'll be happy you are."

Bruce felt a strange sensation, and he looked around. It was the feeling of being watched, and he didn't know where it was coming from. "I know. I know that he had his reasons from hiding things, but I guess I should have noticed how much he needed me." That night, Bruce's nightmares stopped. He woke the next morning and found the sphere had disappeared. Had Loki done it to

teach?

It took the others a bit longer to understand the “gifts” they’d been given.

The next to come to some sort of understanding was Steve. He had had the dreams every night and finally, wrung out, he made his way to a bar. It wasn’t that he could even get drunk, but he needed to go somewhere where people didn’t know him and expect him to be Captain America. So he dressed down and made his way there. He put himself into a corner booth and hid in the shadows drinking beer that wouldn’t drown his sorrows.

A woman eventually sat down across from him, surprising him. He looked at her, a blonde haired woman with vivid grayish eyes. She smiled seductively and he shook his head.

“Hey, not interested in companionship,” he said with a sigh.

She nodded. “That’s good, neither am I. I thought you looked a bit sad, sweetheart. What’s on your mind?” she said, putting her chin in her hand and watching him.

Steve didn’t know why, but he started talking. “I just...this friend of mine, well, I don’t know if he was really even my friend, we were on a team together and I was supposed to lead it...but he never listened, never did what I said...and he’s gone and I keep thinking about my own past now and I don’t know why.”

“What happened in your past that would haunt you so, you’re a bit pretty to be having such problems,” she said with a wink.

He shook his head. “Just I was small, weak, and people made fun of me, teased me and called me things. I’ve changed a lot since then.”

“Was this friend one of those that did that to you?” she asked, tilting her head to the side.

“Of course not, I don’t think he’d do something like that,” he said. “I mean, I don’t know, but I think he probably had his share of problems when he was younger, too.” An image flashed in his mind of Tony, and a memory attached to the idea of being teased and tormented for being different. Steve’s brow wrinkled. Was that true? Of course...

“Thanks,” he said and got up and left quickly.

The next day he found himself in the library asking for help researching a few things. He looked up articles and papers written by Howard and Tony. He was shocked to find Tony’s first paper was published at 15, and it was quantum mechanical theory. Sorting through things he came across a small blurb in a small town newspaper in the police blotter. He blinked and held it up. Howard Stark arrested on one count of child abuse and endangerment. Bail made, case dismissed. Steve took the date and started sorting through things until he came across an article about famous people who were terrible fathers. Howard’s name was in the first position. Steve’s heart was heavy. Howard wasn’t who he thought he was. The article said that Howard had multiple times paid his way out of charges when he had put his son in unnecessary danger, as well as paying off child welfare officers when his child had obviously been abused by him. Accompanying it was a black and white photo of the man he knew dragging a child Tony with him. Steve saw, even in the grainy photo, that Tony’s face was fearful. Tony was afraid of Howard... He went on, delving deeper into the files. There was more than he wanted to know. He put that with what Stane had done that Loki had forced them to watch, and he was horrified that he had said some of the things he had said to Tony. So many things that if he’d just stopped to think about them, they would have made sense.

It was no wonder he found comfort in a bottle, and no wonder he looked for safety in the arms of others. He spent more time with machines because they couldn't hurt him. Every single person in Tony's life had hurt him in some way. There was another article that caught his attention. It had a picture of Tony with his first circuit board that he'd made. Tony told the reporter that his brain went too fast most the time. He laughed and told the interviewer that sometimes he did things before he realized he'd done them and that his brain could out think computers. The article went on to show that even as a child, Tony could do complex equations and the like before a computer could finish the computation.

The librarian came to check on him and smiled gently. She was an old lady with a very kind demeanor. "Are you okay, sweetie?" she asked, glancing at the materials he had laid out.

"Fine, just surprised by some things," he said, starting to gather the materials. She picked up one of the photocopies he'd made of a doctor's report where a seven year old Tony had had a broken clavicle that Howard had given no explanation of.

"Ah, poor child, I see him on the news now and then, heard he's up and disappeared again," she said with a heavy sigh.

Steve looked at her. "Again?"

She nodded. "Oh yes, I archive the newspapers, or I did before they went to digital, I used to put them into microfiche. I remember the times that someone came to remove the articles about that Stark boy."

"Removed them?" he asked.

She nodded. "Oh yes, I was paranoid after the first time, so these that are left are because I made duplicates. Poor thing, I think there were six times that boy was kidnapped for ransom when he was little..."

"Six times?" Steve said, frowning. "I never knew..."

She nodded. "Yeah, father never would pay ransom for him. Said if he paid one ransom, more people would try it. Poor child. I remember one time they barely found him before he drowned when the kidnappers dumped him off into the water in a box. Such a cruel man for a father, you know."

She turned and left then, leaving Steve to stare in horror at the things he had seen. This wasn't the Howard Stark he remembered. He understood now that Tony wasn't going to react well to some of the things he'd said to him. Howard Stark may have been a great man when Steve knew him, but he had been a truly monstrous father to Tony.

He made his way sullenly back to his apartment with these thoughts weighing heavily on his mind. What harm had his words done? To tell Tony such things, to tell him Howard was so much better than he was. It had to have been terrible. He headed upstairs and sat down, taking off his coat, in the pocket of which the orb had traveled with him all day.

"God, Tony," he said quietly, laying back on his bed and staring at the white ceiling. "I had no idea, you should have told me. I wouldn't have listened to you, would I? How stupid I have been. I didn't listen, didn't care about one of my team. What kind of 'captain' have I become?" he said with a deep sigh, and for the first time in two weeks, he slept without nightmares.

Natasha ended up putting herself on leave because the horrific nightmares got so bad that sleeping

was a gamble. She wandered down to a small pub one afternoon and a young woman sat down with a slump beside her, rubbing her leg rhythmically. "Malibu," she said with a sigh, running a hand over her dark hair next.

"You look down, want to talk about it?" Natasha asked, smiling kindly.

She took the fruity drink and smiled at Natasha. "Amy," she said, shaking her hand. Her eyes were a dark brown. "You look like you're not in the best frame of mind either," she said, smirking.

Natasha nodded. "Yeah, trouble sleeping. Think it's because of this friend of mine. He got married and this husband of his blames us for everything in the world that was wrong with him. I can't change the man's past, so I can't understand why I'm expected to suffer for it."

Amy smiled, sipping her drink. "I know what that's like. My brother, he just doesn't understand me. Keep telling him I can't do the things he can, but he doesn't get it."

"Oh yeah?" she said, glancing from her Vodka rocks to her.

"See, I have cerebral palsy. But it just messes with one of my legs, this one," she said patting the leg she'd been rubbing. "Hurts like a bitch, seizes up, makes it impossible to stand for a long time, so I get disability for it. I just can't keep a job, it puts me in too much pain. If I don't move every few minutes...well...you get the idea." She sighed. "He tells me I'm a useless waste because I can walk and there's all these people with CP who can't walk, so I shouldn't whine so much. Well, those people with CP can't even feel their legs so they don't live with the pain I do, you know? I mean, I get the it could be worse argument, I really do, but it really sucks because this is the worst I'll ever have, so for me this is the worst in the world."

Natasha blinked and looked at her for a long moment. "I guess you're right. I never thought of it that way."

She sighed. "Don't get me wrong, I'm grateful I can walk. And I feel bad for those that can't, but I love my twin brother with all my heart. And it hurts like hell to have him tell me to suck it up and deal with it. Some days, I just can't do that."

They chatted a while longer and Natasha left, walking home to think about what the girl she'd met had said. She guessed it wasn't fair of her to dismiss Tony's experiences. Just because being waterboarded wasn't something that she considered particularly traumatic, didn't mean someone like Tony wouldn't find it horrific. It must have hurt, she thought, when she told him he had to get over what happened. How could she, a professional liar completely missed someone that could lie as well as she could? She made it back to the carrier and slumped into bed, for the first time in a long week, into a dreamless sleep.

Clint's nightmares were disconcerting, but he didn't let them get to him outwardly. He couldn't. He had no idea what was happening but he was more than a little convinced it had to do with that goddamned god. He was staring out the window of the helicarrier when Maria Hill walked up behind him.

"Hey Clint," she said. "You look a little worse for the wear," she said, smiling at him.

"Nightmares," he said with a sigh.

"Seems to be going around," she said, looking out onto the city below them. Clint looked up at her with an arched eyebrow.

"Fuckin' Loki is what caused it," he muttered. "Fuckin' bastard blaming us for stuff we had no

control over.”

Maria shrugged. “Well, he does want to see Tony not to the point of killing himself.”

“I didn’t do anything, though. I mean, maybe I was a little crass and teased him about his womanizing and drinking, but he didn’t care about himself, so why should anyone else give a damn?” he said rolling his eyes.

“Ah, Loki thought that you contributed by doing that. Do you think you did?” she asked, looking thoughtfully out the windows.

“Of course not. I mean, it isn’t like he was...doing it to...” Clint said, trailing off.

“Fury told me about the memories that Loki showed you and talked about. You know, a lot of women, and men too, tend to seek out multiple partners after being raped. They’re looking for safety in the act that they didn’t have, some control. Alcohol and drugs are common too. Especially after having been abused as a child, that’s just a bad, bad combination,” she said, sighing.

Clint looked up at her. “I guess I could have done a few things differently,” he said. “But it isn’t like Tony made it easy. The bastard is probably the best liar besides Natasha I know.”

Maria looked at him and smiled. “But isn’t the real problem more that you guys took everything Tony gave you, asked for more, and never bothered to get to know him at all?” She turned and left, leaving Clint to think alone for a long time.

Finally, he got up and headed to his room and fell into his bed and stared at the ceiling. He guessed he had requested a lot out of Tony, and not even asking if he had anything else to do. He already missed his gadgets. Nobody at SHIELD seemed able to even duplicate some of the things that Tony made. He fell asleep after a long moment, not realizing until the next morning, he was no longer plagued by the horrible dreams.

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Thor sat with Sif and the other warriors and thought about what had occurred that day. Sif was unusually quiet. Thor had drank a lot more than he usually did.

“Do you think my brother is doing the right thing?” he asked her.

Sif shook her head. “Is he doing it to help him or just because he wants to possess him?”

Thor thought. “At one point I would say he was doing it to be possessive. However, there is no benefit to acquiring Tony Stark, instead I can only come up with ways that it will inconvenience him and cause him problems. He was willing to give all to have Tony be with him. That...that is a lot for my brother who values his freedom over all else.”

“So you think he cares for the mortal?” she asked.

Thor nodded. “He was vengeful when he spoke to the others. He was something like I have never seen before.”

Sif and Thor sat for a while longer. “Do you think Tony will be happy here?”

Thor shook his head. “I am unsure any longer what will happen.”

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Tony woke up warm and he felt like he'd slept without nightmares for the first time in a very long time. He hummed to himself and went to turn over and found he was pinned. His immediate reaction was to panic, trying to get away from the horrible, heavy weight over his midsection and thighs. He whimpered and went over the side of the bed dragging the covers with him, and ran right into a clear barrier of some sort. He sat up on his knees and poked at it intently for a long time, it seemed to be very solid and surround the bed.

"You can't pass through it, Anthony," came a familiar voice behind him.

Tony turned and pulled the covers around him tightly and stared at Loki. Loki was lying on his stomach with his head propped up on his hands. He stared at Tony and Tony pressed back into the barrier. "Wh-what is it?" he asked finally.

"Well, I was afraid when you awoke this morn, you might try to run off on your own, but that just is not permissible just yet. You shall stay with me for a while yet before you go wandering the halls alone. I'm unsure of your safety despite my Father Odin's words of assurances," Loki said, staying still and watching him. He was slightly distressed to see he didn't seem to be relaxing at all.

Tony swallowed and guessed that the barrier was all around the bed after all. Suddenly the thought that he really was alone here in a place his suits didn't even work hit him and he couldn't stop his hands from shaking. Loki had all this magic he knew nothing about and could never in a million years defend against. He had just, without a thought, formed a barrier around the bed and Tony couldn't escape it. Suddenly, he felt the world tilt and he realized the world had tinted green and he was floating upward from where he was cowering on the floor by the side of the bed. He was used to flying but this had a strange stomach churning effect as he was dropped onto the bed right onto Loki's waiting lap. He'd sat up at some point when Tony was mulling over things.

Tony's eyes went wide as Loki began peeling the blanket off of him without a word. Tony froze; he didn't know what else to do. He didn't remember a whole lot about the day before, but he knew that Loki hadn't taken advantage of him when he was completely out of it. That was good, but what about now. He flinched when Loki's fingers brushed against his bare skin and he couldn't look at him.

"Tony, look here," he said, after he'd pulled away the blanket and left Tony feeling very exposed. Loki himself was still nude as well and wrapped his arms around Tony's waist, fingers dancing gently along his hips and lower back. "I am not going to do anything you do not wish me to do, Anthony Odinson. I may be within my rights to demand the carnal union that seals our binding, but I shall not, Anthony. I fear it must happen, before the next moon, but it does not have to be right away," he said, stilling his motions and placing one hand over the arc reactor and holding Tony's hip with the other.

Tony nodded, not able to trust his voice because the day before was catching up rapidly. He took a shuddering breath and then another. Loki turned him and put both hands on his face, seeing the rapidly building sheen of tears there. "Tis fine, Anthony. I do not wish you to suffer alone any longer. I feel your suffering..." he said, taking Tony's hand and putting it against his own bare chest. "And I want to make it stop."



Sage and Spice

Chapter Notes

SMEXITIMES

and intrigue. Enjoy.

Edits will be forthcoming, so don't be surprised to see this chapter change a bit.

Tony wasn't sure what to think as he sat there for a long moment. He swallowed and nodded to Loki and wasn't really sure what he wanted to do at the moment. Loki smiled and snapped his fingers and Tony experienced for the first time the magical dressing that Loki did. He blinked and looked down at himself. He wore a pair of black cloth pants and a tunic of some sort in deep green with gold edging. The fabric was light weight, though, unlike what he'd worn the day before. He could see the blue of his reactor through it.

"There, shall we walk about the castle today?" he asked, smiling, as though everything in the world was normal and Tony's whole world shattered the day before.

Tony nodded slowly, still out of place. "I guess, yeah, that's fine," he said, shifting uncomfortably. This was all so...different.

Tony suddenly felt his mouth go dry and he looked around, feeling his stomach recoil. Loki noticed and snapped his fingers, a metal bin appearing in his hands and he handed it to Tony in time for him to vomit violently into it. Loki moved to sit beside him on the bed, putting an arm around him as he panted and he realized Tony was crying.

"Anthony?" he asked quietly.

Tony shook his head, clutching the metal bin to his chest and pausing to dry heave into it again. Everything was piling up all of a sudden. Everything was crashing down onto him in a mountain of emotion and pain. His stomach, though empty, was convinced that it needed to continue to void itself of the nonexistent contents.

"Anthony? Are you ill?" Loki asked.

Tony looked at him, his face flushed and sweaty. "I'm not fucking 'ill' you fucking jackass god!" he snapped. "I'm sick because of everything that's happened! Son of a bitch, you don't get what has happened to me? Holy fucking shit! I could just...aragh!" he said, pausing to dry heave again, his stomach seriously deciding that he needed to continue the futile act. "You just...show up...and tell me I'm coming with you...and just whisk me off to fucking Asgard like this...and you tell me I can't choose for myself...and I'm fucking stuck now. I can't...I can't go home...I have to be your fucking man-wife or some other shit you call it, companion, what-the-fuck-ever that means...and you never asked!"

Tony paused to vomit bile this time, wincing at the bitter taste. He hated crying, but here he was, and he didn't care. "You never asked," he said again, panting. "He never asked. No one ever

asked! Howard never asked what I wanted... No one cared what I wanted! I gave...gave them everything they could ask for and more and I just wanted someone...to care what I wanted for a change. Even when I thought it was my choice it wasn't. They were after money, power, no one wanted me," he gasped, stomach heaving again. "No one asked me. Never," he said, his stomach settling, it seemed. There was a pop and the bin disappeared and he was being pulled into Loki's body but he couldn't fight it. Did it matter?

"Anthony," Loki said finally, clutching him to his chest. "I...I am sorry. I thought only of myself. My fear of losing you to your own despair was so strong that I acted without much thought. I only knew that expediency was paramount...I did not think..."

Tony shook his head. "No, you did not think," he sobbed, shoving himself back and punching Loki's chest repeatedly. "You just acted and did this and I'm supposed to be happy and do what I'm told and that's not me you fucking asshole of a god!" he nearly screamed. Loki winced but let him take out his anger and frustration on him.

"I fucking had a life, a sucky life, but I had one, and you just had to step in and make sure I couldn't even control when I lived or fucking died!" Loki held onto him as he punched and hit him. It would have hurt a great deal more if he had been a Midgardian. Tony was more than capable of defending himself from other mortals, he realized. He was still crying, though, and Loki knew that something like this might come. He should have made better choices with all this, but he couldn't change that now.

Finally he reached up and grabbed both his wrists and stopped him because he was heaving heavy breaths and nearly choking on his sobs. "Hush," he said as Tony struggled to free his arms. "Stop, please, Anthony," he said and Tony finally stilled, heaving panting breaths and Loki smiled at him. "Do you feel any better?" he asked.

Tony snarled at him. "No."

Loki grinned. "I see that you do," Loki said and let go of his wrists but winced. He'd left dark bruises around them where he held him.

Tony dropped his hands to his lap and sighed. "I want to go home."

Loki sighed. "You are home."

"I don't want to be here! I don't want you! I don't want this! I want my workshop, my lab, my things, my friends!" he said angrily.

"Your friends that took advantage of you and drove you to want to end your life?" Loki asked, brows meeting in concern.

"I chose to do that, not them!" he snapped, moving to sit further away from Loki. "And you took that choice from me even then."

Loki wasn't sure what to do with him at the moment. He was completely irrational. "Anthony. Why did you want to die?" he asked.

Tony stopped and looked at him for a long time. "What?" he asked.

"No one ever bothered to ask, you said that. I am asking. Perhaps too late, but I do wish to know. Why would you want to end your existence? Why would you carve those words into your arms?" he asked, moving closer to him again.

Tony swallowed and shook his head. "Doesn't matter, does it, you won't let me kill myself, so it was for nothing," he said softly.

"You want your friends, yet you blamed them in your last moments. You loved them and hated them at the same moment," he observed. "I do not understand this at all."

Tony practically growled under his breath. "Just because I didn't like them very much didn't mean I didn't love them. They're my family, and family...it doesn't always like each other," he said with a sigh. "I just...I wanted out of it, I was tired of dealing with the nightmares, the pain, the expectations, and I thought...I guess I was a little angry at that moment," he said, rubbing his forearms.

Loki frowned and nodded. It did make sense. "I see. I suppose I can understand that, in a way. I do not particularly like my 'father' at the moment, but maybe I still hold love or affection toward him in other ways."

Tony shrugged. "Doesn't matter now," he said sadly. "I'm here and you've taken away everything that I was expecting me to be happy about it."

"Don't pout, you are still Anthony Stark," he said with a shake of his head. "You may be made an Odinson in Asgard, but you have not changed in the least. Now, you must be starving. Come, let us go to the kitchen, food shall make your mood lighter."

Tony glared at him and got up. "I doubt it."

Loki reached for his hand and Tony grudgingly took it and was led out. He frowned because he was still barefoot. Great, so he didn't even have boots to make him taller compared to the freaking giant beside him.

"Well, if it isn't the wayward prince?" came a voice from one of the halls.

Loki stopped and turned to place a deep glare upon his face at a man larger than Thor that was leaning against the wall. Loki shook his head. "And what do you want, Darmal?" he asked with a sigh.

"Oh, I saw you and your princess at the ceremony yesterday, so I thought I'd see if I could get a closer look," he said with a shrug. "No surprise you found yourself a girl-boy. Does he speak or is he too modest and shy for that sort of thing?"

Tony was not in the mood. "Look here you, I am not a 'girl-boy' you big stupid son of a whore! I'm perfectly capable of talking for my own goddamned self, and give me a few weeks and I'll take you on without a problem, just ask Thor if you doubt it! I beat his ass a time or two on Midgard!"

Darmal looked at the short, thin man before him. "What? You bested Thor in a brawl?"

"You bet your ass, I did, oafenstein," Tony said. "Now, go play throwing hammers or whatever."

Loki smirked and led Tony away. "Well, I doubt he'll forget meeting you for the first time," Loki said with a shake of his head.

"I'm not in the mood to deal with arrogant Asgardian bastards. Thor was bad enough when he showed up. At least he's a fucking prince, so he has a reason to be prissy," Tony muttered as they entered the large hall where people were having breakfast. Several looked up to see Loki and Tony enter, some with curiosity, others with malice.

Loki seemed to ignore everyone and had Tony sit down at a table while he went to retrieve something from the kitchen. Tony felt like every set of eyes was on him. He was really glad he couldn't hear what they were saying around him. He tried to ignore it but he caught snatches of conversation here and there, most settled around the fact Loki had taken a male companion and how unusual it was to have a Midgardian around.

Loki sat a plate of fruits on the table before him and sat down across from him with a similar one. He looked at him with a smile. "I assumed that the half a suckling pig these brutes can eat in the morning was not to your taste, either."

Tony nodded. "Yeah, thanks, much better. So um...this two guys together thing is not really common, I'm sensing," he said, looking around.

Loki shrugged. "Not often. Generally women are allowed to take the roles of men, like Lady Sif, Thor's friend, but men aren't generally allowed to partner with other men. The exception is soul binding and well, as a prince, I can do whatever I want," Loki said, eating as he glanced around and listened halfway to the chatter. "They'll get used to it."

"So I get to be accosted by big ass brutes like the guy earlier about being a girl," he said with a sigh.

Loki shrugged. "Does it matter? You are more than capable of holding your own with these dullards verbally, and once you have altered your suit, you will be able to compete evenly with their strength."

Tony sighed. "Still, it is sort of...emasculating," he said, shifting uncomfortably as again someone walked past and stared at them. "I don't like being the target of everyone's gossip."

"Anthony, that will be for a very long time," Loki said with a sigh. "Very little changes here, as you see, unlike Midgard things are stuck in time. So this news, for one that I am back, but for two that I've taken a Midgardian male as my companion...they will speak of nothing else for quite some time..."

"Wonderful," Tony said, pushing his plate back and putting his head on the table.

-oooooooo-OOOOOO-oooooooo-

"You are certain?" the cloaked figure asked. The voice was rough and gritty, and there was a hollow ring to the sound in the empty hallway.

Darmal nodded as he stood against the wall near the eastern exit from the wall. "As I stand here. Loki took a weakling male Midgardian as a companion."

"He is weak?" the voice asked.

Darmal snorted. "He is Midgardian. He has no magic. In fact, he has this glowing thing in his chest that keeps him alive. He is pathetic and unworthy of Asgard. I am unsure why the All-Father allowed it. He is no warrior."

There was a laugh. "Is Loki attached to him? Would he be incensed by his loss?"

"I don't know, this is Loki, but he seems quite taken by him. I mean, he drags him around by the hand everywhere, he spend the day yesterday in his chambers, and by the bruises around the Midgardian's wrists, I'd say he's taken with him in more ways than one," he said with a smirk.

The cloaked figure laughed again. "Good, good. Keep a watch on their dealings. I will contact you with further instructions when I need something from you."

The Asgardian nodded and left, leaving the cloaked figure to leave quietly through the doorway he was standing in front of. He smiled to himself. Loki would pay, he would pay dearly. He shucked the cloak and stepped into the cold of the early morning snowstorm, straightening to his full nearly nine foot height as the enchantment faded and he walked away, turning burning red eyes back for a moment on Asgard before he disappeared. Yes, Loki would pay dearly, indeed, with the blood of his beloved.

-oooooooo-OOOOOO-oooooooo-

After a week, Tony had quite got the hang of Asgard, though for some reason Loki wouldn't let him leave the room alone. That was growing troublesome, to be honest. Every night, he erected the bubble of magic and Tony couldn't leave unless he woke him. Tony had stopped freaking out when he woke, and was more comfortable being around Loki now that he knew he wasn't going to try anything Tony didn't want. Of course, over the week, there had been several memorable encounters with other Asgardians, all thinking they could belittle Tony. It didn't last long after his verbal lashings left most of them dumbfounded. Loki was sure that there was not another in the nine realms to compete with himself when it came to verbal wit other than Tony.

Loki had shown him how to enter the workshop for their chambers, and Tony had started to think of it that way, as well, surprising even himself. It felt good to feel metal under his hands and he was impressed that Loki had managed to get everything to Asgard completely intact and unbothered by the magical teleportation. He supposed at least Loki had the forethought to bring everything with him. He spoke at length to JARVIS when he wasn't doing anything else, and so far hadn't come up with a way to integrate him into the chamber. The first week, though, wasn't too terrible.

The second week, though, was far more stressful. Loki was bothered by something and he tended to get surly easily. When Tony asked he said it was none of his concern and told him to go play with his bots. Tony, of course, didn't take that lightly. He ended up sleeping in the workshop for the majority of that week out of sheer annoyance with him. He called Pepper a couple times though the spheres and found out how things were. He was amused that she'd used the extended sabbatical excuse for where he'd gone. He fell asleep talking to her more than once in his shop.

He didn't know it, but when he did sleep there, Loki would barrier the doorway so he couldn't leave, and no one could enter except him. Loki was still feeling the strange foreboding and he was being annoyed by everyone he came across. Thor kept bugging him about seeing Tony, and he kept putting him off. Tony needed to be as far away from the thunder head as possible, he thought. He had a weird feeling, and he couldn't pin it down.

The third week, Tony ended up spending quite a bit with Frigga. He wasn't hiding so much as trying to get a moment's peace without Loki on his heels. It seemed the only person that he trusted him with was his mother. It was grating on his nerves a bit.

"Anthony, you look weary?" Frigga said the fourth day Loki left him with her.

"I am weary of Bambi keeping me on a leash," he said, sitting down on the divan beside her and crossing his arms with a sigh.

Frigga smiled. "He worries, my boy," she said, pouring him a cup of tea. He took it with a sigh.

"Well, I know, but still. I can't seem to go anywhere on my own and I don't understand. You said

I would be safe here in the castle, right?" he said, looking at her with a worried expression.

"For certain, my husband decreed it. If any were to accost you in these walls, they would be expelled immediately, and punished severely. None will incur the wrath of Odin," she said smiling gently.

Tony sighed and scratched his chin. He winced. He needed to groom, is what he needed to do. He didn't have an electric razor though. He guessed he'd have Loki help him with it when he got back to their rooms tonight.

"It has been almost three weeks, my dear," Frigga said with a smile. "How fare you and Loki?"

"Aside from him being glued to my ass," he muttered bitterly. "I don't know. I'm not sure what I feel around him. I'm so angry and frustrated and I could just strangle him half the time."

Frigga smiled. "Sounds like love to me," she said with a wink at him.

Tony started to say something, then rolled his eyes. "I just...he's been good. He's kept his promises. He...he's given me time, and sort of given me space, I mean, he gave me my workshop and doesn't say anything if I stay there all day..."

She nodded. "He cares, Anthony. He does not wish to spoil things between you before they have been able to bloom. The month is nearly up, of course."

Tony nodded. "Yeah, I know," he said, sipping the tea. "I just...I don't know. Part of me wants to push him away so I'm sent back to Midgard when the month expires, and part of me is scared of that very same thing happening," he said, chewing his lower lip in thought.

Frigga patted his shoulder gently. "Do what your heart tells you to do, Anthony. Do not listen to anything else," she said softly.

A few more encounters with annoying Asgardians sent him to his workshop for the next few days. One that really set him back was when a woman grabbed him by the shoulder and slammed him into the wall as he and Loki were walking to the dining hall. She'd asked him what kind of whore he was to get Loki to take him as his own for good. Loki had sent her packing and told him not to bother with filth like her, but it still got to him. The second was another warrior that thought he was not worthy of royal position and had tried to run him through with a sword. Loki's magic was faster though, and he was gone in a puff of green. Loki declined to comment on his whereabouts after that time. It was harrowing though, especially after being told that he was safe.

Things took a turn, however, when there was another feast. This one was to honor some victory that Thor and his friends the warriors three and Sif had over something in some other realm. Tony didn't pay much attention as he was ushered to sit at the head table by Loki and across from Thor and his friends. Thor was even louder in Asgard than he was on Earth, Tony noticed. There was a ton of food consumed around him and he was amazed at how much they could eat. It was no wonder their body mass was so much greater. He, luckily, was not the subject of the feast this time, and he was very glad of it. By the end of the feast, he was a bit light headed from the mead.

He had to piss like crazy though and he frowned because he felt like a child asking permission if he said something to Loki, so he just got up and headed toward the bathrooms quietly. He wasn't exactly avoiding Loki's view, he knew he'd seen him get up. Loki surely would know where he was going. It wasn't like after nearly a month he couldn't manage to piss on his own. When he was finished he turned to come out and ran into someone. He looked up to see someone vaguely familiar.

“Darmal,” Tony said, recognizing him. “Excuse me, I’m going out, if you need to piss,” he said, moving to go past the huge Asgardian.

He stepped aside and Tony went past him. He was surprised, though when he grabbed him by the arm and yanked him around and covered his mouth with his thick hand. Tony’s eyes went wide. He leaned over and spoke into his ear.

“So, I hear that you like things rough,” he said and Tony’s heart shot to his throat and he shook his head violently in his grip. “Oh? But Loki marks you up nice,” he said, running his hand down Tony’s arm to his wrist where Loki had accidentally bruised him the second day he’d been there. “I think you like it that way, held down and squirming, don’t you? Now that you’re his little harlot,” he said, biting hard into the top of his ear. Tony was starting to panic. This guy was way too strong and he hadn’t even come close to merging his tech with the ambient magical energy of Asgard yet.

“Loki is possessive, this is the first time I’ve seen you alone,” he continued, his fingers pressing painfully into his mouth and he wished he could open his jaw a little so he could bite him at least. Granted, it wouldn’t have done any good. “I think Loki just likes to keep you to himself. He should learn to share...”

Tony was trapped and alone and he was going to pass out in moments from hyperventilating with the guy’s hand over his mouth. He knew it. Too many things were slamming into him and he closed his eyes and concentrated very hard on Loki. He didn’t really believe the stupid stuff about soul binding, soul links, whatever the hell they wanted to call it. Right now, though, he was really hoping he was wrong and there was a connection between them and Loki would know he was in trouble. Eternity seemed to pass and he was about to give up hope that there was anything to it as the bastard continued to tell him things that he really didn’t want to hear.

“Tony, surely, since you’re a boy-wife, you need a real Asgardian, and not some Jotun freak like Loki,” he said. “You are worthless and weak, and Loki is nothing.”

“Nothing will destroy you before you draw another breath if you do not release him,” came the only voice that Tony wanted to hear at the moment. He opened his eyes and sat Loki standing there, hands tucked behind his back and glaring down his nose somehow at the taller Asgardian that was holding Tony.

Darmal looked up and smirked. “Well, so it is true. You are linked to this weakling bitch,” he said and shoved Tony hard into Loki.

Loki caught him and Tony clung to him for dear life. Loki tipped his head back and wiped blood from his mouth away. “Come, I’ll take you back to our room,” he said softly, and Tony couldn’t move. He was still panicked. Loki sighed and wrapped both arms around him and they disappeared from the hallway to appear in their chambers. The moment Loki let go he fell to his knees and stared straight ahead. Loki took a cloth and wiped the blood off his face where the Asgardian had split both his lips against his teeth. Loki quelled a surge of anger and hatred that threatened to make its way into hands that were trying to be gentle.

“Let me see,” he said softly, tilting his head back to see the damage the brute had left. He feared more the damage to Tony’s fragile mind than his body, however. He had bruised his face, bright bluish finger marks were blossoming over one side of his chin, and he could see his arms were marked as well. Again, Loki fought down rage that threatened to tighten his hands on the tanned arms.

“I am so sorry, I did not believe he would approach again, not after I spoke with father about the

incident last week with the warrior," Loki said, rubbing the blossoming purple marks gently. Tony tilted his head up and stared at him for a long moment before he lunged into his arms suddenly, breath fast and heart hammering through his skin where it touched Loki.

"I'm not those things," Tony said, clutching to Loki's body frantically. "Those things he said, is that what they think? Is it true what he said?" he said with such a plaintive sound that Loki tensed.

"What did he say?" he asked, not wanting to know at all, but needing to know all the same.

Tony had put his face over Loki's chest and was breathing heavily against him. "He...he said, once you bonded me...once it was done, that you wouldn't care and would just forget me and leave again, like you did before..."

Loki felt a shiver go up his spine. Like he did before. "I left before for many reasons," he said quietly. "I loved her, Anthony. She gave me Hel, my dearest one. I left for many, many reasons, Anthony, none of which exist any longer."

Hel's mother, whose name Loki could no longer even think without agony in his iced heart, had been loved so much by him, but he'd went away. They had conceived their child, and a week later, Loki had left and disappeared. By the time he returned, she had died, leaving him with a daughter. Things changed, and he didn't take another wife. He had never intended to take another wife, and he supposed he hadn't, after all.

"He said you only wanted me...because I was weak and couldn't resist you," he said quietly, his breath much easier now. The vice gripping his heart had begun to let go a little.

Loki pushed him back gently and tilted his face upward and sighed. "You are not weak. You are strong. I do not take weaklings to my heart, Anthony Stark. And even if we were not tied together through souls, I do believe you would have captured my attentions anyway."

Tony swallowed. "Why? I'm fucked up, man, I know that. Look at me; I'm a goddamned hot mess most the time. I panic at the drop of a hat, I get all worked up over nothing at all, and I just don't know what to do with myself now..." he said, blinking owlishly at the dark haired god.

Tony was sitting on his knees in front of Loki who was kneeling in front of him. Loki was struck by the fragility of his situation. Torn to pieces by the world around him, he was barely holding himself together. Even after three weeks, Loki realized, nothing had really changed that much. He was still lost and unsure of himself. He truly felt like he was alone, and for the first time in a long time, Loki's heart ached. How could he have let this happen? How could he have not realized the pain he was in?

"Shall I instruct you, my love?" Loki said, meaning it more than he expected.

Tony looked up at him curiously. "What?" he said.

"You, Tony, you are my love, and I will teach you what to do with yourself," he said softly, leaning forward and kissing his creased brow and then the bridge of his nose with gentleness that Loki himself didn't know he had.

"I don't know," Tony said, eyes wide, but when Loki sat back, he saw something that made him smirk. His eyes were blown wide and nearly black. He recognized lust when he saw it.

"You don't?" Loki asked, sliding one hand down between Tony's clenched knees to feel a definite response there. Tony winced and wasn't sure what to say. A blush shot up his neck into his cheeks. He couldn't deny that, that was certain.

“Shh,” Loki whispered. “I told you. I will not hurt you. Never. To hurt you is to hurt myself. I may be many things, selfish among them, but I will not lie to you. Did you not notice, we seem incapable of telling falsehoods to each other, no matter how we try? When I avoid speaking, it is because to you, I cannot lie, and to speak is to tell you my heart uncovered.”

Tony still was unsure, but he didn’t push him away as Loki pressed gentle lips against his. It was soft, and feeling his lips gliding across Loki’s was sublime, almost surreal. Tony’s breath hitched, allowing his lips to part just slightly. It was enough that Loki’s tongue slipped between them, gently caressing his lips and brushing at his tongue. Before he knew it, Tony reached up and grabbed Loki’s face and began kissing him in earnest, his own tongue vying with the god’s for dominance in the kiss that began gentle, but had become insistently impassioned. Loki was surprised but pleased, and wrapped his arms under Tony’s armpits, and lifting him up easily and laying him out on the bed. Loki smirked and snapped his fingers, making both their clothes disappear as he ground his own heated arousal down against Tony’s very apparent hardness.

Tony groaned. It felt good, too good, he thought, rolling his eyes. “Anthony, I will show you far more pleasure than you’ve ever known,” Loki whispered, sucking a deep mark on his pulse point. Tony arched and moaned under his touch.

Loki smiled as he licked down Tony’s chest and sucked on the pert little nub there. Tony gasped, having never really been so turned on by that action. Loki reached up and slid his fingers into Tony’s mouth, thrusting them back and forth several times, and was pleased that Tony sucked and bit at them. He smiled, treating the other nipple with the same adoration, and slipped his wet fingers first into a jar he had conjured at his side, and then against against Tony’s entrance. At the touch Tony whimpered, and Loki moved up and captured his lips again, seeing the panic trying to edge its way into his eyes.

His fingers swirled against the puckered entrance and then, he slowly and carefully slid his middle finger into him, giving him enough time to adjust to the intrusion. He wouldn’t rush this part, he told himself, no matter how much his own arousal ached. Tony was squirming against him, and he smiled into the kiss as he moved to rake his teeth against his collar bone and slide his index finger inside beside the other. Tony arched, a slight whimper escaping his lips. It was uncomfortable at first, Tony remembered, though it had been a long time since he’d had someone prepare him, and whatever Loki had used tingled and felt warm as it spread inside him. He closed his eyes as painful memories tried to flood his mind.

“Anthony, look at me,” Loki whispered. “Open your eyes; see me,” he said, almost panting as he worked his fingers in and out of him slowly. He used his other hand to tilt his face up. “Keep looking at me. I’m not him, Anthony. See me, feel me.”

Tony swallowed, opening his eyes and focusing on Loki’s bright green ones as he arched a bit when he slid a third finger into him. He slowly worked him open, waiting for the moment when that tight ring of muscles softened and gave to his insistent touch. He then crooked them and sought out that spot... He grinned as Tony tensed, letting out a long drawn out moan. He gasped and Loki smirked. His cheeks were both red and his mouth hung slack. Both his hands were fisting the sheets at his sides and he was seemingly writhing back on Loki’s hand trying to get more from him. Loki reached down and stroked him a few times and then gripped the base as he tried to release. Tony’s eyes went wide and he let out a low whimper.

“Shh, not yet, my love,” he said softly, moving to straddle his left leg and pulling his right leg over his own left leg. He thrust his fingers several more times, finding no resistance and Tony was starting to grind back on him. The special oil he’d prepared was certainly doing the trick. A mixture of fragrant herbs that enhanced sensation, it was something he had formulated long ago but

not used in a very long time. He used his other hand and retrieved more of the thick oil and stroked himself a few times, but found he was dripping more than enough to ease his passage even without the oil's help. "Relax, my love," he whispered, leaning over him and pushing against him, breeching him easily. Tony gasped and his breath grew rapid. Loki reached down and stroked him, feeling his arousal fade. He pressed forward, slowly but steadily until he was sunk all the way into Tony's body. Loki bit hard on his lip and was still. He reached out and brushed Tony's hair out of his face, and saw the lines of pain on it. "Relax, my love, relax," he whispered, steadily stroking him as he tried to stay still.

There was something, though, almost like electricity in the air. Tony arched suddenly, his eyes glowing as green as Loki's magic. Loki gasped, his magic lighting his veins up green. Loki suddenly pulled out and thrust in quickly, despite his attempts not to. Tony yelped, eyes wide. "Stop, Loki, too fast!" he said, panting as he reached up and gripped Loki's forearms. Loki grit his teeth. "Trying," he gasped, trying to get his magic under control. It wanted the bond completed, it wanted consummation, and magic was not patient. He forced his body under control, the magic as well. He waited again, his breath stilled in his chest.

Tony was fighting the urge to grind against him; he wasn't ready, he wasn't ready yet... but his body reacted despite himself. He ground back against him and Loki responded in kind. Tony moaned, Loki sliding directly against his prostate and he moaned, the leg he had over Loki's arm clenching against him hard. Loki panted and started rocking into him gently as he could, slowly and steadily building up a faster and faster pace. Tony was officially a mess, his face flushed, eyes blown and leaking a steady stream of fluid onto his belly as Loki sped up, his taunt abdominal muscles damp with sweat and Tony's essence now.

"Oh, Loki...I'm...oh god..." Tony muttered, gripping Loki's arm where it rested beside him on the bed.

"Yes, Anthony Stark, Anthony, my love, my amazing love, show me, release for me," he whispered slamming harder and harder into him as Tony started uttering a steady stream of curses in various languages.

"Fuck, fuck," Tony muttered, and his eyes rolled back as he crested, intense pleasure shooting through him and though he didn't see it, green light lit up every vein in his body.

Loki followed him as Tony's body clamped down on him harder than he expected and he almost couldn't move within him anymore. He groaned, and felt his magic explode around them both in a burst of green that expanded and then condensed back into them both. He gasped and fell on top of Tony, but thought quickly enough to brace his weight with his arm. He pressed his forehead to Tony's. "Anthony, I love you..." he said as he slipped down onto his side.

Tony stared at him, panting for a moment and blinked. A crashing feeling of terror went over him. He sat up and grabbed a robe from the bedside and ran, barefoot away from Loki as fast as he could. Loki frowned and sat up. "Anthony?" he called, standing up. He wasn't sure what just happened.

Tony found himself in a dark out of the way area of the castle and sat down against the corridor wall. He ran a hand over his head. He was so confused. He was okay with the sex; actually, it was great sex, in fact. He hadn't felt that good since he was in college. He was okay, until he said he loved him. Then the world exploded. How could he say something like that? This wasn't about love. He was a thing. Property, even. He was stuck with him because he owned him. He put his head into his knees and sighed.

"Well, look what we have here," came a familiar voice.

Tony froze and looked up to see someone he really didn't want to see. He didn't have time to respond as something hard impacted with the back of his head, sending him sprawling toward the hulking Asgardian.

"Careful, don't want him damaged," Darmal's voice came from somewhere nearby. "He'll be damaged enough."

He blinked, feeling the cold of snow falling over him and then the world faded to the intense sensation of panic in his heart. Except, he knew the panic wasn't his own. He let things fall away and it was quiet in his head for a time.



Olive Remnants

Chapter Notes

Edits coming, fret not my friends. :)

Next Chapter: Malachite Fury

The first sensation Tony had upon waking was cold. It was cloying and clinging to every bit of his flesh. It swirled and traveled through every pore, it seemed, making the world feel like ice around him. He didn't want to open his eyes. He was afraid of what he was going to see. The world felt wrong, tilted, shifted, as though he'd traveled somehow that wasn't natural again. It wasn't quite like the Bifrost "hitching" as Loki had put it. Something was wrong, though. The reactor housing felt ice cold inside his chest and he was sure he was going to freeze completely if he wasn't warmed up soon. The ground was icy, in fact he could feel no warmth at all from it. He shivered and pulled the thin robe around him tighter. Why'd he have to run out on Loki like that? It was stupid, so fucking stupid. He said he wasn't safe. He said there was something wrong and he didn't know what it was. Once again, Tony Stark had really fucked up.

"Anthony Stark, or should I say, Anthony Odinson, now," came an unfamiliar voice. Tony really didn't want to find out who it was. He knew it was going to be bad for him. He was sure of it.

Finally, he cracked his eyes opened and found himself someplace with very dim light. He felt like his blood was turning to ice though as he huffed out a breath that turned smoke white in front of him. He had no idea how cold it was, but it was a damn sight below freezing. He couldn't feel his nose anymore. He blinked and felt there was ice on his eyelashes. Well, wasn't that just lovely. He swallowed and looked in front of him to see someone sitting in a throne carved of stone...wait. It wasn't stone. It was ice. He was sitting on ice. Everything was ice except the ground, and it seemed to be frozen solid under him.

"W-wh-where am I? Who-who are y-you?" he stammered through chattering teeth.

The figure stood up and Tony realized he was a good fifty feet away across the chamber. As he got closer, he realized he was huge. He was also blue. That wasn't something he saw every day. He clutched his hands in front of his mouth and tried to breathe hot air into them. It wasn't that warm even from his own breath.

"Ah, where are you? Jotunheim, my dear newly crowned prince of Asgard," he said as he kneeled down in front of Tony. His eyes traveled up. He had to be at least nine or ten feet tall. If he wasn't so fucking cold he'd have been able to estimate it for sure. As it was though, his brain wasn't working that well. "And who am I? Why, your brother in law, you know. Loki Laufeyson's half-brother. He killed our father, you know. I know, he gave you the Odinson name, which he's accepted as of late, but he's still the prince of Jotunheim first. My mother died as well in his little attempt to impress his adopted daddy, Odin. He cannot hide that he is a Jotun like us forever."

Brother? So that's what Loki was? He blinked. "L-loki is l-like you?" he said, moving to try and keep the edge of the robe under his knees and legs as he sat on the freezing cold floor.

"You haven't seen his true form?" the apparent Jotun said to him.

Tony didn't answer, just glared at him. "Syrus Laufeyson, though in life he never acknowledged me as his son. My mother was a servant of his. But it doesn't matter much. Now I'm one of the few left after Loki decimated us. Are you cold, little Midgardian?"

"Fuck you," Tony snarled, stopping to shiver violently. "You know I'm f-f-fuckin f-f-fr-freezing."

"I don't understand Loki's desire for a mortal Midgardian. So very frail. A scant hour here and you're almost dead of the cold. I'm contemplating what I shall do that will injure my brother the most. Shall I simply leave you here to die of the cold? A mere hour or so and you'll be frozen to the bone. Or should I keep you alive a bit longer, and let Loki track you to my side so he can watch as I dismember you in front of him? Oh the look on his face to see his lover ripped to shreds before his very eyes...I would savor that for eternity..."

Syrus reached down and snatched Tony up in one of his large hands by one arm. Tony tried to hold the robe against him but it swung out and the cold, biting air rushed underneath the thin garment and he thought he was really going to die right then. He glanced down, held up by his hand dangling at least four feet off the floor as he held him up near his face.

"Such a small thing. You stink of him. I still smell his seed on you. What a pitiable thing you are, and you do not deserve such attentions from a prince. I shall keep you alive, just so I can have the pleasure of letting Loki watch you die in front of him," he said, letting go of him and turning away as Tony fell. The drop was only a few feet but it still hurt like hell when he came down on both feet, feeling both ankles grind and shoot pain up his legs immediately. He fell backward and panted.

The Jotun left and a few minutes later a large blanket was drug into the room that he could burrow into, and a smaller Jotun brought in some wood and built a fire on the frozen ground beside him. Tony got as close to the fire as he could and tried desperately to warm his hands and feet, both of which were burning from the cold already. He couldn't believe this. This guy wanted revenge on Loki. Wonderful, he had to leave the goddamned room. He had to leave. He wondered why Loki wasn't here? He was able to come to him if he needed him, wasn't he? Unless something had happened to him?

Tony shivered again and got as close as he could to the measly fire. They'd left dry wood, where they'd gotten it, he had no idea, but he didn't care. He had to keep the fire going, though. He had a feeling they wouldn't light it again if he let it go out. He looked up at the top of the cavern he was in, some thirty feet high if he didn't miss the mark, and shivered again. The only light was from the small fire and some sconces lit with some sort of blue fire on the wall he was against.

"Loki, where are you?" he asked, chewing on his lip. "I'm sorry...I screwed up again."

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"Calm down!" Thor snapped at Loki who was almost unintelligible as he paced back and forth in their mother's chamber.

Night had fallen deep on Asgard, and outside the cold was nothing compared to the temperature inside the room with the Prince of Asgard's fury. He paced back and forth, muttering curses in tongues most could not understand, and there was an obvious red hue to his eyes from the simple fact that his restraint was stretched to the limit currently. The room was lit by candles and the sconces along the walls and Frigga stood behind her distraught child. She wore her hair pinned up and wore a dressing gown from when Loki had roused her from her slumber.

“Calm down? Calm down? How am I going to calm down, Thor? He’s *gone* and even the soul magic can’t take me to him! Someone has blocked it!” Loki almost yelled at his brother.

“Loki, please,” Frigga said, putting her hands on his shoulders. “This accomplishes nothing. You must calm yourself so we can figure out what has happened. Now, tell me what happened?”

Loki started to protest but took a steady breath. He closed his eyes and fought the urge to just scream at them. “Anthony left the chamber. He was upset so I did not immediately follow him. You know as well as I that he has felt I was overbearing and that I have been keeping too close a watch upon him. I thought he needed some time. He is not in the best frame of mind since I brought him to Asgard. I did not...I did not expect to sense such horrible fear so suddenly through the link. I immediately teleported to his side, but he was gone. When I reached for the link again, I felt it, but it was dampened somehow. Something has stretched it thin again. Not like when I was here and he was on Midgard. This is different.”

“Perhaps another realm,” Frigga said. “What did he become so upset for?” she asked gazing at him.

“I perhaps said something that I should not, and he was frightened by it,” Loki said, sighing and crossing his arms. He looked away from Frigga’s questioning gaze. She knew that something had occurred that caused him a great deal of pain. She worried that bringing it up could hurt Loki in the end.

Thor, though, didn’t see the pained expression on his brother’s face. “You know he is not capable of handling many things, brother, why would you do something that would upset him to such a degree that...”

Loki turned on him with blazing green magic licking around his now molten red eyes before he could finish speaking. “I said I loved him, you idiot!” Loki almost shouted at Thor with a snarl. He took a breath and turned away from him, forcing his magic back under control.

Thor blinked and let his jaw hang for a moment before he let it snap shut, not knowing how to respond to that. He had of course thought his brother had been cruel, or heartless, as he was capable of doing at the worst times. Instead, Loki was being...caring. Loki had gone to the window and was leaning with both hands on the glass and staring at the floor between his feet. Frigga stood and rubbed his back between his shoulder blades gently.

“He was frightened to hear this from you?” she asked gently.

Loki swallowed. “We...completed the binding. There...there was an incident, Darmal, he scared Tony at the banquet when he went to relieve himself. I took him to our chamber...and it happened the way it should, not with force or coercion or magic like I feared. I saw, for the first time in many years, a look on someone’s face that was intended for me alone and I realized how much that meant. I knew he wasn’t ready. He sees himself as less than me still. He sees himself as unworthy of love, mother. I frightened him because he cannot believe that someone, anyone, could love him as he is.”

Frigga nodded, looking to Thor with eyes that spoke the order she did not have to voice. Get Darmal. Thor nodded, rushing from the room to look for the Asgardian. There was no time to waste. He needed to know what the man knew. For a man who had already been chastised for interfering with Loki and Tony to approach a second time despite the very real threat of retribution from Odin was something that needed explanation. Of course, as his brother already knew, Thor was not as dumb as most people believed him to be. He understood things far more often than he was given credit for. This was one of them. He would know what Darmal knew. Or else.

It took a while to find the Asgardian man. He was in one of the halls drinking with his friends. Thor didn't have Mjolnir or anything but that didn't matter. He did not need his hammer for this. He came into the hall and walked directly for Darmal. Around him, his companions looked up in shock as Thor came up behind him and yanked him from his seat and threw him across into the far wall in one powerful jerk of his arm. He turned and stalked toward him. The rest of the hall had gone silent. Darmal was gathering himself up amid the tumbled down decorations from the wall behind him.

"Thor!" he said as he set eyes on the prince. "What has brought such rage to you this eve?" he asked, looking truly shocked.

"Who has taken Anthony Stark Odinson?" he said in an even voice that bespoke no mirth.

Darmal's face changed, not much, but just enough that Thor caught the moment's recognition. "I know not of what you speak, brother Thor," he said, shaking his head. "I saw the Midgardian at the banquet, nothing more."

"You are not a brother to me, Darmal. You hath wronged my brother, and thus you hath wronged me. My brother is beside himself at his loss, and I will know who has his companion," Thor said, standing seemingly calm. A person who knew him, however, would note the barely restrained fury behind his eyes, and the wide stance he'd taken, readying to pounce at a moment's notice.

"Thor, good prince, I have no knowledge of what you speak," he said, putting on a supposedly innocent expression. Thor was not fooled in the least.

Before the other man could react, Thor had moved and landed a solid strike across his jaw, sending him reeling back into the wall hard enough to splinter some of the wood. He wobbled and looked back with a hand over his mouth. Blood was flowing steadily and it was obvious that Thor had managed to break his jaw in one punch. Such violence from the thunder prince was rarely seen save on the battlefield. Thor considered this a battlefield.

"You will tell me what you know, then I shall put you into the dungeons myself, and if you are lucky, my father will show you mercy and execute you at dawn, if you are not lucky, you will yet be alive when I have found Friend Anthony. You have many more bones I may break, Darmal," Thor said, staring at the man, once more utterly calm.

Darmal shook his head and stared for a moment as two guards came up behind Thor having been sent by Frigga. "Jotunheim," he muttered around his loosened jaw. "All I know..."

The guards took him away and Thor let them. He was not going to waste any further time on a traitor. He headed back to his mother's chambers with all haste. If Tony was in Jotunheim, that boded quite ill for him and the rest of them. He opened the chamber door to have both Frigga and Loki stand at his entrance.

"Jotunheim, he's in Jotunheim, if Darmal is speaking the truth," he said.

Loki paled considerably and sat down on the divan once more. "Jotunheim. This is my fault. This is revenge, then. Someone took him because of my deeds."

Frigga sat beside him. "My son, now is not the time for blame. We must recover him soon. Even the best prepared Midgardian would not survive long in Jotunheim. I fear, my son, it may already be too late unless whoever has him knows that he must be kept warm lest he shall perish."

Loki stood. "I shall go for him," he said, looking at Thor.

“Not alone,” Thor said with a nod of his head. “No, you shall not go at this alone, brother. They will be waiting for you. If this is a matter of vengeance, they will expect you soon. I will go. I believe this may also be an opportunity for the others to make right the wrongs they have laid against Friend Anthony.”

Loki shook his head, his disheveled hair a corona around his head instead of the sleek black it normally appeared. “I do not understand of what you mean, brother.”

“The Avengers. If they be true friends, if they truly wish to help, then they shall come with us to Jotunheim and rescue him. It is the right and noble thing to do.” Thor glanced at Frigga who gave him an encouraging smile. “Do not run off alone, please, brother. I shall get the warriors three and the Lady Sif, and any other Asgardians who would come to the call of the prince.”

Loki wanted to tell Thor to leave him alone. He wanted to tell him to leave it to him. He wanted so desperately to tell him these things out of pure spite. He couldn’t, though. His own pride would be the death of Tony if he did such things. Instead, he looked at Thor and simply nodded.

“I shall acquire the books and items I need. Mother, I need the cask,” he said. Frigga nodded.

Thor and Loki walked out together and separated in the hallway to go to their separate ways. Loki headed to his own chambers and Thor to the halls where the warriors still drank. He entered where the warriors three and Sif still say talking in the main banquet hall. He approached and all four stood.

“Good Thor, you have a look of fury upon your face,” Fandral said, brows meshing together for a moment.

“I go to Jotunheim this night. Will you accompany me?” he asked.

Volstagg stood and nodded. “I shall, my brother in arms,” he said.

“Why?” Sif asked. “I shall go as well, but why do we go to Jotunheim? Is there threat to Asgard there yet?”

Thor smiled. “We have been betrayed by one of our own, I fear. Darmal has been taken to the dungeons after revealing that this night, Friend Anthony has been taken to Jotunheim.”

Hogan frowned. “Someone has stolen away the Midgardian? For what purpose?”

“Loki believes it is revenge, perhaps for the death of King Laufey. Perhaps there are yet enough living Jotuns to wage war. We do not know what the conditions are. However, Anthony is not equipped to handle Jotunheim. He will die there from sheer exposure if we do not aid him quickly,” Thor said.

“Why aid a weakling?” one of the other warriors said from beside them.

Thor turned and gazed at him. He was much like Volstagg, tall and thick, no doubt good with his weapons. “Because he is a prince of Asgard, is that not enough for you?”

The warrior snorted, more than a little inebriated with the ale. “If he is unable to survive, he does not deserve to be a prince of Asgard if he cannot...”

The man never finished his sentence because Volstagg had stood and knocked him to the floor. “It is not for you to decide who is worthy! A prince of Asgard has been taken, and a prince of Asgard is asking for your assistance. It matters not what you think!”

The rest of the room was silent as the Warriors Three and Lady Sif left with Thor. A moment later, several other warriors stood and followed behind them to aid them. Thor led them to the armory and then headed toward Loki's room. He looked up, a magical green glow shrinking several items down and putting them in a bag at his hip.

"I shall accompany you to Midgard," Thor said with a nod, Mjolnir already upon his hip.

"I do not need a baby-sitter," Loki said, rolling his eyes which had yet to return to green.

"I know this, brother. I wish to accompany you because I am one of their number. I wish to see their reactions and what they say," he said gently. The last thing he wished was to antagonize his brother any further.

"Very well," Loki said, reaching out and grabbing Thor by the arm and disappearing in a pop of green.

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Steve wasn't expecting to have visitors to his small apartment. He really wasn't expecting for those visitors to appear in the middle of his living room. He really wasn't expecting to see Thor and Loki again, especially the god of mischief. He looked up from his newspaper and blinked at them. Loki looked at him, and Steve was surprised. He hadn't ever seen the god look so...unkempt. His hair was wild around his head, and his eyes were bright red, not red as in tired, but the actual color had turned blood red. There were strange lines running over his face, but just shadows of them, and they weren't very pronounced at all. It was obvious something was really wrong.

"I have come to give you an opportunity to absolve yourself in my eyes," Loki said, staring at him for a long moment.

Steve slowly stood up and looked at him. "How is that?"

"Anthony has been abducted and taken to Jotunheim, no doubt in retribution for my past actions regarding my birth father, the king of Jotunheim, Laufey. Warriors, Thor and I go to rescue him. We wish to know if you will aid us," Loki said, trying to keep his voice calm and even.

Steve shook his head. "Of course, anything, I'll help," he said softly. He had done quite a bit of thinking as well of research since Tony had been taken to Asgard. The things he found disturbed him and he realized that a good captain, a good leader, would have taken the time to know and understand all the members of his team. Making assumptions had led to the whole situation. He would not make that mistake again.

Loki nodded. "Do I need to request of the others or can you acquire their answers?" he asked.

"I'm in contact with them. I'll call them," he said, grabbing his phone, the StarkPhone that Tony had given him, and the only piece of high technology he owned.

Loki and Thor sat down while Steve took the phone into the kitchen and made the calls. Loki fiddled insistently with his hands out of nervous anticipation. He honestly didn't care, but he would make this attempt. He knew that Tony loved his friends. He knew that Tony held no anger nor blame toward them, even though in the end, the words he'd carved were indicative of some deep seated blame he held toward them. Loki could never scrub that from his memory.

A few moments later, Steve returned. "They're on their way. What do we need?"

"Cold weather gear. Jotunheim is the land of the frost giants. The temperature does not rise even

close to freezing. It is a barren waste of rock and ice," Thor said softly, looking at him. "Medical supplies in case Loki is unable to heal injuries obtained from the cold or wounding."

Steve nodded, tapping the information into the phone. Loki looked at him. "You come to his aid now that he is gone from your life?" he said quietly.

"He is my friend, whether you believe it or not, Loki," Steve said. "We only wanted to help him."

"By sending him away?" Loki said with a snarl. "To a place he feared?"

Steve shook his head. "I don't know why Tony would fear what we were talking about. It was a place to help him stop the alcohol he was slowly killing himself with. The would have helped him."

Loki stared for a long moment and knew that Steve believed what he said. "He did fear it. Every part of his being shook at the thought of going to this place. I know not why."

Steve shook his head as he heard the sound of the helicarrier overhead. "They're here," he said softly as he stood and led them down to the outside where a helicopter with Natasha, Clint, and Bruce was landing. They stepped out; each one dressed in high tech thermal suits. Natasha handed one to Steve and he stepped inside and put it on quickly. Each one had a backpack that appeared to be full of some sort of supplies. When Steve returned, Natasha handed him one as well. None of them spoke, only watched carefully.

Thor nodded. "I'll open the Bifrost for us to travel so Loki is not as taxed by the transference," he said, summoning the bifrost and taking Bruce and Steve by the arm. "Grip each other," he said. Loki growled under his breath but grabbed Thor's arm above Steve's. Natasha and Clint grabbed each other and Bruce and Steve.

Moments later they stood upon the Bifrost and Thor led the way into Asgard. Loki teleported ahead of them to where his mother waited with the other warriors. Odin had come down as well to see them off on their way. Loki looked at him for a long moment.

"My son, I bid you blessing and good luck on this mission. Bring back the one that holds your heart in his hands. I shall welcome your victory over those that would harm you, and thus harm Asgard," he said with a nod, and turned to leave.

Loki swallowed. "Thank you, Father," he finally managed.

He saw Odin stop and straighten up for a moment before going on. Only Frigga saw the slight smile spread over the god's lips at Loki's words. He had grown so very much in the last few years, and having someone to care about made him even more willing to change for the better. Frigga came forward and placed her hands on his shoulders and kissed his cheek.

"Be safe," she said. "Bring him back, my son. Bring him back for him, and for you," she said, smiling and leaving with Odin.

Thor arrived moments later with the rest of the Avengers team in tow. All were trying to hide the awe with which they looked at the new realm around them. Some of the warriors glared and someone shouted, "More Midgardians to protect? Is this an escort mission or a rescue mission?"

"We can take care of ourselves," Steve said, glaring at the warrior.

There was mumbled talk among the fifteen warriors that had come to Thor's aid aside from Sif and the Warriors Three. "We will go to Jotunheim and we will teach them the penalty of taking from

Asgard!" Thor bellowed and a warrior's cry answered them. Thor looked to Loki.

"Lead us, brother," he said with a smile.

Loki looked at him for a long time. "If I return to Jotunheim, I do so in my true form. They will know the wrath of a Jotun raised among the warrior Aesir. They will know the unbridled wrath of a god."

Loki's form shivered and the pale flesh faded away, replaced by the blue, lined skin of the Jotun. A wave of cold air came roiling off his transformed body. He turned to look at his small force. *His* force. His eyes nearly glowed red in the dim light and he smiled, as green magical energy began to build around his hands.

"I will bring them the end they so desire."

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"Syrus, Loki has left Asgard," the short Jotun said from beside the larger frost giant.

Tony was still wrapped in the blanket. It was keeping the majority of the cold away, and the fire seemed to have some sort of magic to it, because even when he faded into sleep, it didn't go out. That wasn't to say he wasn't still freezing. He simply wasn't freezing to death anymore. He was still chilled to the bone, and the blanket smelled of something weird, so no doubt it was a pelt of some sort. He didn't really want to know what kind of creature it was the skin of. Whatever it was, it was huge.

The larger Syrus got up from the ice throne he sat upon and came toward where Tony was huddled behind the fire. He kneeled and uncovered him, and Tony was sure he was going to die again. It was just so fucking cold.

"Ah, your lover is on his way, Midgardian," Syrus said, smiling and his red eyes boring into Tony's.

"Y-yeah? H-he's g-g-gonna kick your ass," Tony said, crossing his arms over his chest and trying to retain what heat he could.

Syrus grinned and turned behind him. He held up a hand and blue energy spun outward toward the middle of the large room to begin forming a square that rose from the floor beside the icy looking throne. It kept growing until it was a cube and then around six foot in height. When it was complete except for one side of it, Syrus snatched Tony from his confines and shoved him roughly into the square box which completed forming around him. It was solid ice that was stronger than glass. He pounded his fists on it as his teeth began to chatter against each other. There was no wind, and it was thankfully warmer than it was on the outside of the cube of ice. Warmer didn't mean it was above freezing though, and all Tony could do was pull the thin robe under him and kneel on the floor so his toes didn't freeze off by standing on it.

"There, my pretty pet," Syrus said, sitting down on the icy throne beside him. "I'll keep you close at hand and see if your lover manages to get to you in time. You do look so lovely, a Midgardian in a display case, it would seem. Tony glared at him and tried to hide the shivers that were taking him over.

"Syrus, Loki's entered our realm," came a voice from the doorway. Tony saw it was the same smallish Jotun servant that had been here earlier. He wished he could find a sympathetic person here, but somehow he doubted they were anything except devoted to this Syrus.

"Good, good, make sure our forces do what they can. I'll face him here. He'll watch as his little toy dies painfully in my grasp," he said, grinning.

Tony honestly didn't know just how the hell he was going to get out of this. He shivered again and clutched himself trying to steady his breathing. The small box, though clear, was giving him claustrophobia and images of the small cave he'd been in tried to edge into his mind. He pushed them violently away. He wouldn't let them get to him now. He swallowed and looked up to see the Jotun staring at him.

"Is the little Midgardian frightened?" he said with a smile that held nothing but contempt.

"F-fuck you," Tony said. "I'm c-cold, not scared of your blue a-ass."

"That isn't entirely true, Anthony, now is it? There is fear in your eyes. I see it quite clearly. You are afraid that he'll sacrifice you, aren't you?" he said with an air of superiority.

Tony shook his head. "He's here, th-that's what matters."

"Is it?" he said and snorted. "He destroyed his own people to satisfy the All Father Odin, did you know that? He chose to try and impress his father, a man who stole him from this land as a baby, by destroying his own kind. Really, can you trust such a man? Monster, really. The Jotun are the monsters. Your Loki is a monster."

Just then Tony felt the connection snap strong again. He gasped, falling to his hands and knees as the force of Loki's mind nearly crushed him. The strength of his emotion and drive was like nothing he'd ever felt. Syrus looked at Tony with a strange look on his face as Tony began to laugh inside his icy prison.

"What amuses you, Midgardian?"

"M-monsters are not b-born. They're made. My-my L-loki is here, and he is f-f-fuckin' p-pissed... Is he a m-monster? Oh yes, yes, he's a m-m-monster, but that's ok-kay, because I know his heart...I know him...you don't." Tony's voice was strained and he was growing very tired. The cold was simply starting to become far too much. He hoped that they got here soon. He wasn't sure how long he could even stay awake.

Syrus smiled at him. "Ah, we'll see. He will leave you to die, if it serves him. You owe him no loyalty, Midgardian. You are weak and yet you are full of yourself. No wonder you are a match for the traitor Jotun."

Tony felt the pull on the thread. He knew Loki felt it, and he knew Loki knew that he was slowly freezing. He felt the sudden urgency, and then, everything inside his mind exploded in green.

Green
*Angel's Light*

Malachite Fury

Chapter Notes

First Draft! Edits will happen.

There are tales of the wrath of many gods. They all share one thing, however. It is never in one's best interest to incur the true wrath of a god, of any sort. There tends to be extreme consequences. Those that faced Loki and his force in the frosted plains of Jotunheim would know this first hand as they clashed forces with them. The force was small but it was far more deadly than anyone who fought that day would have imagined. A handful of Asgardians, a Jotun traitor and a group of Midgardians would not bring down the forces of Syrus Laufeyson. In the end, as many before him, Syrus would befall victim to his own hubris.

It took a few moments before the shock of where they had come faded from the Avengers' eyes. The place was cold, and appeared to be void of life. As many harsh environments that those present had been in, they were shocked by the sheer brutality of the land around them. Then the silence broke as a thunderous roar resounded beyond the rag tag group's vision. Over a ridge, charged at least six of the legendary frost giants that the Midgardians had heard about from Thor.

Loki stood in front of them and yanked away the cloak he wore. He had no need to hide himself now. Those with him had seen his form, and they still followed him. Fury was not a word that the god used lightly. His hand flashed and a beacon like light rose above him, a shining star of green would alert his enemy that he was coming, and nothing would stop him. Syrus had committed the one thing Loki could never forgive. Of all his long life, his heart was the only thing more guarded than the vaults of Asgard. Syrus had stolen his heart.

Thor was first into action, yelling and sending Mjolnir to slam into a ten foot tall Jotun who was running full tilt at them with what could only be described as six giant ice dogs running beside him. The warriors three sprang into action, along with the other warriors. Of course, Fandrel found himself standing back near Hawkeye. He glanced at the other archer and smirked.

"Ah, young one, care for a bit of a wager?" Fandrel yelled across at Hawkeye.

Hawkeye paused and narrowed his eyes at him. "What you want to wager on, Robin?"

Fandrel smirked. "See how many arrows thy sink into the flesh of the Jotun, and how many thee make fall. I wager I shall fell one before ye," he said, releasing three arrows at once at a coming Jotun with a huge iced maul.

"You're on, Man-in-tights," Hawkeye said with a smirk, leaping down a small embankment and using a frozen rock slab to slide down it to the bottom.

Lady Sif rolled her eyes as she waded right in and took on a smaller Jotun hand to hand, while behind her, Black Widow made good use of their numbers to land shots with her pistols. They'd been loaded with special armor piercing rounds that Tony had created for her, and they seemed to easily pierce the hardened flesh of the icy creatures around them. Hogan and Volstagg had both taken off in flanking positions with a couple of the other warriors each. Bruce had turned into hulk and was wading through throngs of smaller creatures, some the dog like giants and others like

human sized goblins. Steve was easily taking on a smaller Jotun in hand to hand, though the sound of his shield ringing from the strikes could be heard over the entire field of battle. For a long while, everyone became lost to each other in flurries of snow, ice, and flying bodies.

Loki had one mission, and that was to end this nuisance of fighting as soon as possible. The longer the battle lasted, the longer Tony had to suffer. There were several times one of the attackers hesitated when they saw Loki in his Jotun form, confused as to who he was. Each time, Loki used it to obliterate them at will. Several times, his clones made foes fall with great ease. It was nearly frustratingly easy and made him even angrier. This Jotun would kidnap his Anthony and then try to defend his new claim with this meager offering of force?

Behind him, the force was encountering little resistance. He looked up in time to see Fandral scaling a Jotun by climbing a ladder of arrows sticking out of the giant's thigh while Hawkeye pelted him from the opposite side to distract him. Fandral leapt to his shoulders and notched three arrows and shot them with point blank force into the base of the giant's neck. His dismount was sloppy, nearly falling flat on his face, Loki noted as he blasted a small pack of the troll like ice creatures from existence completely. It was apparent that their forces were not expecting Loki's Jotun form and there were several enemies that avoided him.

Natasha found herself more than once rescued by Sif's quick swordplay, especially when a pack of the ice wolves closed in on her just as her pistols were out of ammunition. Sif gave a curt nod and waded back into the next pack of creatures. She looked over to see Steve drop one of the bigger giants to his knees after kneecapping him with the shield. In short order, the ten foot tall creature was felled and Steve was moving onward. Bruce had hulked and was tearing through creatures at a frightening rate, his own strength rivaling the largest giants. He had been followed by one of the Asgardian groups headed by Volstagg.

Loki could feel Tony's life flickering. He could feel his fear and more than that, he could feel his anger. Loki smirked. That was expected of his companion. The fear even was not for his own life, Loki knew. It was for Loki. It took them no more than a half hour before the intense battle seemed to dwindle. Creatures ran, wolves yelped and disappeared, and the last remaining Jotun disappeared into the snows that were beginning to fall heavy on the world.

With the foes behind them, there was only one destination. The ruins of the king's throne room. He sensed Tony growing weaker and weaker. The cold was taking its toll on him. He growled as he walked up to a wall with no seams in it. The others made their way up to him and he turned and placed a hand on the wall.

Everything around them burst in a cloud of green smoke as the wall shattered into tiny particulates and the wind blew it away. Inside the room sat Syrus beside a cube that held Tony inside it. His eyes, though were glowing bright green to match Loki's.

"Magic bonds are not that easy to break, Syrus Laufeyson," Loki stated as the glow receded from both his and Tony's eyes.

Syrus looked up and smirked at his brother. "Why, brother, is that any way to speak to me?"

"You are not my brother, just because you are the bastard child of a dead king," Loki snarled, his eyes nearly glowing red with the intensity.

Tony had never seen anything so terrifying. Perhaps it was because he was not only seeing Loki like this for the first time, but he could feel the pulsating and unbridled hatred and anger coming from the furious god. That, more than anything, made the sensation nearly palatable in the room. He shivered and glanced at the smug looking Jotun behind him. Like hell, he was not some

princess in distress. He snorted and let a shiver pass him and began to manipulate the arc reactor's tactile controls without looking. From the outside, he looked to be only holding his hands over it. The truth was far more important to Tony Stark.

"But brother, you've got no one else. Blood, is blood, look at you, you are like me, not like these pale, disgusting Aesir who lied to you about what you were," Syrus said, standing up and leaning on the cube containing Tony.

"I am Loki Odinson. I made my choice when I watched Laufey die. Odin did not understand it then, but my choice was to stand with the Aesir," Loki said, moving closer.

"Tsk, no closer, Loki, I know of your tricks," Syrus said and waved his hand and let the cube melt around Tony who looked up with a gasp as a rush of cold air contacted his already frozen skin. Syrus grabbed him up in his arms, wrapping an arm around his waist and stroking Tony's head thoughtfully. If Tony hadn't been so damn cold, he might have done something about that, but he instead kept his eyes closed and concentrated on what he was doing with his hands clutched over the arc. "You see, I have your precious little pet now. And you don't get him back."

Tony felt his teeth starting to audibly chatter. Luckily, the robe, thin as it was, was still closed over him, so his hands were hidden under the folds. If he got out of this with all his fingers and toes intact it was going to be a miracle. Loki growled and took a step forward, but Syrus squeezed Tony's body hard and Tony yelped as something, his hip bone, he thought, cracked. His eyes had flown open and he was staring at Loki and the others now. What? There were so many, and the... the team? Loki'd brought the team? He swallowed as the pain radiated out from where the giant's arm lay across his pelvis.

"Put him down, Syrus," Loki said carefully, his blue toned hands clenching and unclenching at his sides.

"No, no, see, you killed everyone I loved, so you're going to watch as I slowly kill what you love, isn't that the way it should be?" Syrus said, squeezing his arm around Tony again until Tony gasped against the shooting pain. "I'll break every bone in his body first, and through the soul bond, you'll feel it, keenly, and then, as he dies, you're power will be greatly reduced, and you will be helpless."

Tony's fingers flow in the pattern over the arc shakily. This bastard wasn't going to let him go. He had no intention of putting him down until he'd cracked him to pieces while Loki was forced to watch. While the others were forced to watch. He growled under his breath and then opened his eyes to lock eyes with Loki's red ones. He gave Loki a cockeyed grin and panted.

"Don't worry 'bout me, I got this," he said, though it was a lot shakier and a lot weaker than he would have liked.

Syrus laughed, causing Tony to groan as his bones shifted in his grip. "Your princess is funny. He believes he has control over this situation still."

Loki frowned and then smiled and shook his head. "You made one mistake, one huge one, Syrus Lafeyson."

Syrus snorted and stared at the smaller Jotun before him. "What do you mean? If you attack me, he dies. Your magic is useless against me here. And he is a helpless Midgardian."

Loki shook his head. "That is your mistake. He is far from helpless. He is the companion and partner of Loki Odinson, Prince of Asgard, and he is also the smartest Midgardian I've ever

encountered. He is a match for my wit, my power, and my intelligence. He is not some helpless creature. No, he is much more than that. He is, perhaps, the only creature in the nine realms worthy of my full, undying loyalty and respect. No, you have made a mistake in thinking that the man you hold is helpless. It has been your undoing."

Syrus looked confused and shook his head to respond. However, he was so completely focused on Loki, that he had paid no attention to what his captive was doing. Tony's hands worked fast quick as he yanked the arc reactor out of his chest with one decisive move and slammed the back of the rapidly brightening object into the soft flesh of the Jotun's belly. Blood bubbled around it as everyone shielded their eyes. Loki cast a spell to shield those around him as the arc reactor began emitting brilliant flashes of light, blinding the Jotun as Tony shielded his eyes from it with his arm. He winced as he was let go and met the ground with a crash. There were some other broken things, he thought as he rolled away as best he could. He wasn't sure he'd make it away from the arc in time.

The world seemed to explode in white light and a shrill whine that split the air. Tony blinked and looked up to realize he was looking into a pair of red eyes that he knew. Loki was holding him up where he had fallen to the ground, and Tony could see that there was a greenish, and very familiar shield surrounding them.

"Hey," Tony said. "Sorry I ran out..." he muttered, his breath starting to heave.

Bruce kneeled down. "His arc, he's going to die without it..."

"Got one in my lab," Tony said, looking at Loki. "Do what you gotta do, Lokes."

Loki nodded, closing his eyes and allowing a green glow to encase Tony's body. Instead of fading, it remained around him. Bruce looked up with confused eyes. Loki reached out and took the thermal suit that Bruce was holding and flicked his hand, dressing Tony in the warmth it offered in a flash.

"I've put him in a time stasis. I can hold it long enough to take the Bifrost back to Asgard to his lab," Loki said with a nod as he hefted Tony's immobile body into his arms and turned to look at Thor.

Thor nodded and opened the Bifrost and they returned to Asgard, leaving behind the cold of Jotunheim. Loki had no concern for the "brother" he left behind. In the dark of Jotunheim's chill, nearly dead and very angry, Syrus Lafeyson plotted his revenge should he survive the night. He was unsure if he would, but thoughts of revenge two fold made his pain easier to endure.

-oooooooo-OOOOOO-oooooooo-

Loki led the others to the doorway in their chambers where he'd set up Tony's lab for him. He went in and the others followed, amazed at what they saw. It was everything Tony worked with and worked on. All complete and there...

Loki laid him in the chair and looked up.

"JARVIS, where is Anthony's spare arc reactor?" he said. Tony had been able to install JARVIS inside the lab easily enough, but outside the lab had been more difficult.

"Yes, Sir Loki. It is in the drawer to the lower left of the chair. Sir's vitals are unreadable, what is the condition?" JARVIS responded.

"He's in a time locked stasis field, JARVIS," Loki said, pulling the reactor from the drawer and

releasing the field.

Tony gasped and coughed as his eyes went wide. Loki patted his shoulder as he manipulated the reactor with his magic, hovering it over his chest as he used tendrils of magic to make the connections far quicker than his physical hands could have. Finally, Tony panted as the reactor clicked into place in his chest. He was obviously in pain, however, from the cold and form whatever the Jotun had done. Loki looked up where Thor watched.

“Brother, please bring Mother. I’ll need her help,” Loki said to him quietly as he placed a hand on Tony’s head.

“No,” Tony said, slapping his hand away. “Don’t, don’t do that. I want to stay awake.”

Thor smiled and nodded, leaving quickly to fetch Frigga. Loki sighed. “Anthony, you’ve broken bones and your fingers and toes are nearly frostbitten off. Let me put you to sleep until Mother and I...”

“No,” Tony said, glaring at Loki. “I’m not letting you.”

Loki snorted. “You are so stubborn,” he growled before standing back and crossing his arms.

“So are you,” Tony said, wincing as the weight on what he was relatively sure was a broken hip shifted.

“Indeed, a match true,” came Frigga’s voice from the doorway.

“Mother!” Loki said, looking up. “I need your help, I have expended too much of myself already to...” Loki said as she put an arm around him.

“Hush, child. You deal with the bones, my son. I’ll deal with the cold, as that will take more magic to fix,” she said gently.

Loki nodded then glared at Tony. “This is going to be painful, are you...”

“Dammit, Lokes, just do it already and get it over with!” Tony snapped.

Thor stepped back where the other Avengers silently watched from the entry area. Natasha put a hand on Thor’s arm and he turned to her.

“He cares about him, doesn’t he?” she said softly as Loki and Tony snapped back and forth at each other while Frigga smiled knowingly, her own hands glowing from her work.

Thor smiled. “I do believe that Tony has begun to love my brother. I was unsure. This month has not seen good results between them. I feared the worst, and Tony would choose to leave and abandon my brother. The loss would have devastated Loki beyond anything else.”

Steve shook his head and crossed his arms over his chest. “I don’t...I don’t understand why Loki...” he started.

“Loki sees beyond what Tony shows him,” Bruce said quietly from beside him. “What we never bothered to see. We just...we just let Tony show us who he wanted us to see, and ignored everything that said we should have looked further. Tony asked for help in a lot of ways, and we ignored it,” he said, running a hand over his head slowly.

“He never asked for anything,” Clint said with a frown.

"He did," Steve said slowly. "He tried so many times to show us he needed us to listen, that he needed a friend. That's what Loki's given him, more than anything. He's given him what we never did."

Thor nodded. "Tony has had to endure much here. It is not uncommon for two males to form a relationship, but it is rare for a prince to take a male companion because there is no chance of children. Well, there is, but that is a complicate ritual. It is even more rare for an Aesir to marry someone of a different realm. Loki, as you see isn't really Aesir, so for him to marry and retain a title... The All-Father promised him some boon I have yet to know."

Steve frowned and looked at him thoughtfully. "A boon?"

Thor nodded as Loki stood back while Frigga continued to treat the cold related problems. "Yes, Loki gave much for Tony's presence, more than what he says. I am unsure what he has been promised, but it has given my brother a strong sense of duty to Asgard, and he has attended his duties and orders quite readily. My brother has never done so before now."

"What could he have been given for him to act that way?" Natasha asked as she watched thoughtfully.

It was obvious that Loki was worried, and even more obvious that he was completely in love with Tony. He would step from one foot to the other and then touch Tony somewhere just slightly, as if to ensure that yes, he was still there, and still alive. He would snap at Frigga for not working fast enough and Frigga would calmly tell him to be patient, a subtle smile on her lips. Tony would snark at him and Loki would quip back something and then he would seem to go back to his worried stepping back and forth. Natasha wouldn't have believed it if she hadn't seen it for herself.

Thor sighed. "That I do not know. I should put you in rooms for the night. Tony should rest once Mother has finished. Come, I will show you to a set of chambers you can use," he said, turning and leading them out.

A few moments later, he left them in an extravagant room with two large beds and a pair of large divans. All four of them were exhausted and each one fell into a deep sleep shortly after Thor had left them to return to Loki's chambers. He returned to find his mother had completed the treatment and was instructing Loki to make sure that Tony went straight to sleep. Thor waited and left with his mother, leaving Tony and Loki to themselves after the incredibly trying night.

Loki watched them leave. He turned to Tony and snatched him up from the seat without a word, to which Tony protested loudly that he could walk just fine, he was just sore. Loki was having none of it and put him down in their bed and crawled up beside him. He snapped his fingers and switched their clothes out for something comfortable for the night. Loki stared at Tony for a long time until Tony rolled his eyes.

"Okay, that's creepy. You still have this stalker thing going," Tony said with a smirk, laying on his back and smiling up at him.

"I was terrified of losing you, Anthony," Loki said quietly. "When you left from here, I was heartbroken, and then you were so frightened and then just gone, I...I've never been afraid before, Anthony."

Tony reached up and cupped Loki's face. "I'm sorry. I just...when you said you loved me...I didn't believe it. I thought...I thought you'd gotten what you wanted, and I'd...I'd just be thrown aside...and it scared me because I...I thought I deserved that fate and I was okay with it. Then, you said you loved me and I believed it and I didn't know what to do..."

Loki smiled and kissed Tony's brow gently. "I know all that and more," he whispered. "Until that moment, I didn't realize what you meant to me. The consummation, that was everything I hoped, but I would go forever without tasting of your flesh if it meant you were to never leave my side again. I would rather have you beside me than be without you."

Tony smiled. "Oh, no, I liked that part, a lot, so yeah, you can taste again, trust me," he said with a wry smirk spreading across his face.

Loki smirked in returned and realized he'd never altered his appearance back. He tilted his head and looked at Tony for a long moment. "You do not see me as a monster like this?" he asked.

Tony sighed. "You're Loki, no matter what color. Though, gotta admit, the blue is kinda hot..." he said, his eyes growing heavy. He yawned and let out a slight squeak that made Loki laugh. Tony smacked him and rolled away from him on his side.

Loki settled in behind him, wrapping his arms around Tony's chest. "That was risky, with the reactor," Loki said softly as he buried his nose in the back of Tony's head.

Tony nodded. "Yeah, figured if nothing else, I'd go out fast, rather than that bastard doing what he had planned," he said, wriggling back into the warmth that Loki's body offered. Loki's skin slowly morphed back to the normal peach and the slight chill he gave off faded. Tony murmured in contentment at the increase in body heat.

"Rest, we'll talk more when morning comes," Loki said, kissing Tony's head gently. Tony hummed in agreement and faded to sleep. Loki, however, didn't find sleep for a long time, instead lying awake, clutching Tony's body against him.



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